

Submitter: Jonathan Downey

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2995

HB2995, while perhaps rooted in good intentions, sets a troubling precedent by singling out one group for financial compensation based on historical grievances, ignoring the complex tapestry of Oregon's past. The state's history, like that of many others, includes injustices against numerous communities—Native Americans, Chinese immigrants, and Japanese Americans interned during World War II, to name a few. By focusing solely on African Americans, the bill overlooks these other groups, creating an arbitrary hierarchy of victimhood that risks fostering resentment rather than reconciliation. Moreover, it assumes present-day residents, many of whom have no ancestral ties to Oregon's past wrongs, should bear the financial burden of actions they didn't commit, which undermines personal responsibility and fairness. Beyond issues of equity, the practical implications of HB2995 are a logistical nightmare. Defining who qualifies as an "African-American resident" deserving of reparations opens a Pandora's box of bureaucratic challenges—will it require ancestry tests, residency duration, or proof of familial harm? The task force's mission to "look at ways" to provide reparations offers no clear endpoint, likely leading to endless debates, bloated administrative costs, and divisive political battles, all funded by taxpayers. Instead of healing old wounds, this bill could deepen social fractures by reducing complex historical injustices to a transactional payout, ignoring the broader need for unity and practical solutions that benefit all Oregonians today.