

Submitter: Steve Ryan

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2995

Honorable members of the committee,

I submit this testimony today to express my opposition to the proposal to establish a commission to explore the issue of paying in Oregon. While I understand that the topic of racial injustice and its long-lasting effects on marginalized communities is a subject of deep concern, I believe that any proposal for reparations is neither a practical nor a fair solution and therefore a commission to explore this is impractical.

First, the historical context: While it is undeniable that slavery, segregation, and discriminatory policies have caused significant harm in this great nation, the focus should be on addressing those wrongs through policies that benefit all citizens, regardless of race. We have already made significant strides toward racial equality through the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, affirmative action, and various social safety nets. These laws and policies are already in place to help create a more level playing field.

Second, the question of fairness: Reparations, would involve compensating individuals for harm done by people long deceased. The notion of holding today's generations responsible for actions they did not commit presents significant ethical concerns. Many people who live today, including African Americans, were never directly impacted by the injustices of the past in ways that would justify receiving payments. The idea of redistributing wealth on the basis of ancestry, rather than individual need or hardship, risks perpetuating division and resentment rather than unity and healing.

Third, the practical implications: The logistics of implementing reparations would be extraordinarily complex and costly. Determining eligibility, deciding the amount of compensation, and determining how funds would be distributed would create an enormous administrative burden. Furthermore, it is unclear how reparations would have a lasting positive effect on the community. Would it be more effective to focus on addressing systemic inequalities in education, healthcare, housing, and criminal justice through policy reforms and targeted investments?

Lastly, the potential unintended consequences: A reparations program could inadvertently create further racial tensions by fostering an "us vs. them" mentality. It could also undermine the hard work and effort of individuals from all racial backgrounds who have contributed to the progress we've made as a nation. We must

focus on building solidarity, promoting economic opportunity for everyone, and creating policies that allow every citizen to prosper, rather than creating an environment where we emphasize division based on historical injustices.

Conclusion: Rather than pursuing a task force to explore reparations, I believe we should work toward addressing the underlying causes of racial inequality through policy reforms that focus on education, job opportunities, healthcare access, criminal justice reform, and other areas where systemic inequality still exists. By investing in opportunities that benefit all Americans, we can create a more just society where the legacy of racial injustice is truly overcome.

Thank you for considering my perspective