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Chair Tran, Vice-Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans:

I urge you to pass [HB 2995](#).

I am a 75-year-old white male. In my lifetime, I have had confidence in the ability of our local, state, and national governments to take action collectively, far more effectively than by our individual actions, to remedy past and present wrongs. I am a member of the Portland group of [Coming To The Table](#).

I have been interested in American history since I learned to read. In part, it's because the history I learned starting in the 1950s resonated with me as a white boy: For example, the presidents had all been white males, so they must have been the best qualified, right? And the businessmen (all white) who built the railroads must have been persons of dedication, intelligence, and vision to pull off that transcontinental project. And the frontier folk who settled the interior of North America, developing all that empty land (mostly white) – brave, steadfast, and entrepreneurial, right? My country, right or wrong. America was a wondrous and special country among nations.

As I got older, I learned more: The Civil War. Frederick Douglas. Fort Pillow. Harriett Tubman. The Spanish-American War. Women's suffrage. The incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, (and the reparations some received during Ronald Reagan's presidency). McCarthyism. Vietnam. Watergate. Iran-Contra. Money in politics. Gerrymandering. Economic inequality. Presidential pardons.

America had its warts, too.

But Americans tried to better themselves, and their country. They listened. They sought solutions. If there were circumstances where a group of citizens had been treated unfairly by other citizens, Americans considered what to do. They thought about the unfairness. They mulled. They considered.

Reparations as a possible solution for past wrongs is nothing new, at all. In fact, several of the commenters opposed to this bill were apparently unaware of the reparations paid in the 1980s to some Japanese-Americans interned during World War II – a legislative

program approved by none other than Ronald Reagan. Other levels of government have engaged in reparative efforts for various historic wrongs, from acknowledging and issuing apologies, to non-financial reparations, to financial reparations.

HB 2995 would establish a group of citizens to “study” and develop proposals for reparations. Certainly, one of the options of such a group would be to recommend that there is no solution at all to past unfairnesses by citizens of this country. I do not believe that would be such a group’s conclusion. [California’s Reparations Task Force](#), after three years, produced in 2023 a 1,030-page [report](#) that, as one commentator says, could serve as a blueprint for states considering what to do about this issue.

Were there wrongs? Yes.

Are there possible solutions? Yes.

Would such a commission be an expression of Oregon values to examine and approve possible solutions? Yes.

Let’s get started.

Sincerely,

Chris Cobey