

ANDREA VALDERRAMA
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HOUSE DISTRICT 47

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February 27, 2025

House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Oregon Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2995: A taskforce bill to study Reparations

Chair Tran, Vice-Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and other members of the committee,

I am proud to submit testimony supporting HB 2995 - which creates a taskforce to study reparations.

Beginning before statehood, Oregon passed exclusionary laws that prevented Black people from settling in the territory.¹ The final exclusionary law was not repealed until 1925 – but since then, Oregon’s Black population has been relatively small, at just under 2% of the total population. In comparison, Black people in Washington and California are 4% and 5.7%²³, respectively. Racist and discriminatory lending practices further complicated Black Oregonian's ability to build generational wealth. There is evidence that redlining continued as a standard practice in Portland until the 1990s.⁴ These practices not only prevented Black families from building equity through homeownership but also placed undue economic stress on entire communities, as evidenced by the decline of once-thriving Black communities such as Albina, Alberta, Boise, King, and Cully. In the 1970s, following the decline of these communities as a result of discriminatory practices, ODOT announced that the I-5 freeway would cut Albina in half, effectively isolating it from the rest of the city and tearing the community in two.⁵ The presence of a major arterial freeway

¹ Nokes, Greg. “Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon” *Oregon Encyclopedia*. 17 May 2024. [Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon: Oregon Encyclopedia](#).

² United State Census - Washington State Profile. [2020 US Census](#).

³ United State Census - California Profile. [2020 US Census](#).

⁴ Lane, Dee. “Blueprint for a Slum.” *Oregon Live*. 10 Sept. 1990. [Blueprint for a Slum](#).

⁵ Roos, Roy. “Albina Area (Portland).” *Oregon Encyclopedia*. 11 Mar. 2022. [Albina Area \(Portland\): Oregon Encyclopedia](#).



contributed to worsening air quality and the increased presence of pollutants.⁶ These wrongs have still not been rectified, and the Black community statewide still suffers the consequences of these practices and decisions.

HB 2995 will implement a taskforce to study and gather information on what reparations could look like. The state has a moral responsibility to right the injustices perpetrated against the Black community—reparations provide an opportunity to do so.

The Late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. expressed in the Letter From Birmingham Jail,

“I am cognizant of all interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, ties in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly”⁷.

Our communities' fates are linked, and a taskforce to discuss potential reparations for the Black community would allow a path towards a full stomach, equitable access to education, the chance to create generational wealth, livable communities, and affordable housing for those who have been historically harmed.

Reparations can be monetary, or can take the form of subsidized mortgage rates, subsidized tuition, beautified communities, and investing in workforce development for Black youth. They can look like investing in the production of equitable and affordable housing, which could close the large gap in housing inequalities between Black and White communities⁸. It is the taskforce's job to find and report back the possibilities of what reparations could look like while researching the impacts of Oregon's exclusionary laws.

Members, I urge you all to support HB 2995 and move it out of this committee.

⁶ Environmental Protection Agency. “Living Close to Roadways: Health Concerns and Mitigation Strategies.” [Living Close to Roadways: Health Concerns and Mitigation Strategies | US EPA](#).

⁷ King, M. L. (1963, April 16). *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. Letter from Birmingham Jail, by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. <https://letterfromjail.com/>

⁸ *Systemic racism, exclusion and discrimination in housing*. Oregon Metro. (n.d.). <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/sites/default/files/2021/10/14/racial-equity-affordable-housing-bond-10.14.21.pdf>

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script that appears to read "Andrea Valderrama".

Andrea Valderrama
Oregon State Representative
Outer East Portland – House District 47