

Kate Brown
Governor



Oregon Commission on Black Affairs
"Advocating Equality and Diversity"
1819 SW 5th Ave., Portland, OR 97201
O 503.302.9725/F 503.473.8519
Email: oaco.mail@oregon.gov
Website: www.oregon.gov/OCBA

Testimony in Support of SB 939
April 7, 2015, Hearing Room B, 3 pm
Senate Human Services and Early Childhood

Chair Gelser, Vice-chair Olsen, and Senators Dembrow, Monnes
Anderson, and Kruse:

As the Chair of the Oregon Commission for Black Affairs, I am supporting SB 939. I have served on the Commission on Black Affairs for three years working with my colleagues, including Senator Monroe and Representative Frederick, to address disparities affecting the African American community throughout Oregon.

While the OCBA and all of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions have submitted testimony in support of SB 939 for its hearing today, I wanted to especially add my support. I know firsthand the effects of poverty and disproportionate association with the criminal justice system on families from my own neighborhood growing up in St. Louis, not far from Ferguson. But this is a nationwide problem and the study on which this legislation is based shows that among women inmates of the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility 48% were women of color. While the reasons for this are complex and begin early for children of color, an important part of the solution is strengthening parents and families.

I have read the Coffee Creek project report with interest and, along with the Oregon Advocacy Commissions and the OCBA urge you to invest in parenting support for incarcerated Oregonians. Equipping parents in prison to grow positive relationships with their children while behind bars and empowering them to return to families after incarceration with new skills is a needed step for Oregon.

Sincerely,

James I. Manning Jr., Chair

OR Commission on Black Affairs

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