

Testimony of Paul Krissel + Frances Loberg
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Chair Doherty, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony. My name is Paul Krissel. I live here in Salem, 1675 High Street SE. I speak in support of HB 2845.

I serve as co-chair of the Racial Justice Organizing Committee. We are a Salem based group of allies supporting the work of organizations representing people of color in our city. Our organizing principles include action in support of those organizations, and taking responsibility for our own learning. We conduct ongoing study sessions on issues of racism, structural inequality, oppression theory, privilege and similar topics to deepen our understanding of racism and its impact in our community.

In our effort to learn, we are confronted by the deep lack of awareness of racial and cultural differences that exists in our society. There is profound lack of understanding of the experiences faced by subordinated ethnic, racial and social groups among us. A major result of our lack of understanding of each other, and of the structural and institutional barriers placed in the path of subordinated groups, is fear and hatred. The less we know about each other's experience, the more prone we are to appeals to fear and hatred of the "other". The less we understand about the systemic inequality that exist in our institutions and social structures, the more we are likely to reject any personal responsibility or societal responsibility to create a just society for all.

Our children must be given the opportunity to learn about the full diversity of our community and of our society. We must give them the chance to overcome fear and hatred through understanding, both at individual and systemic levels. We must learn about each other and the richness of our varied experiences in this society. Every ethnic, racial and social group possesses a full panoply of historical and current experiences within this society, some magnificent and wonderful, and some horrific, painful and life threatening. It behooves us all to learn more about each other and the depth of our lived experience in this society. This should start with our children.

HB2845 is a good step in that direction and I hope that the legislature during this session has the courage to move Oregon forward as an open and welcoming environment for all who work and live in Oregon.