

JANELLE S. BYNUM
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 51



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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 8, 2018

Housing Committee on
Human Services and Housing
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 4010

To:
Chair Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer;
Vice-Chair Rep. Andy Olson,
Vice-Chair Rep. Tawna Sanchez
Members of the Committee

I am writing to express my support of HB 4010.

Oregon has a dark history. It was the only *free* state admitted to the Union that included a Black Exclusion clause in its constitution. This clause discouraged black pioneers from settling here and mandated public whippings for those blacks who refused to leave. Although the clause was eventually repealed, it ensured that Oregon was established as a Utopia for white settlers.

This effort was furthered through discriminatory housing practices that forced Portland's black citizenry to Vanport, which was decimated by a flood in 1948.¹ And when these families settled in N/NE Portland, banks set minimum mortgage amounts that redlined huge portions of these areas. This illegal practice drove down home values, encouraged crime and reduced home ownership.² Indeed, this legacy of exclusion endures to this day. The 2010 census found that Portland was 76% white—making it the whitest big city in the United States.³

¹ Mark Kirchmeier and Camela Raymond, *Long History of Bias Forces Blacks From N/NE Portland*, Portland Tribune (June 8, 2017), available at <https://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/362214-241151-long-history-of-bias-forces-blacks-from-n-ne-portland>.

² Dee Lane, *Roots of Gentrification: How 1990s Battle to End Redlining Changed History in North and NE Portland*, OregonLive (Aug. 25, 2014), available at http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2014/08/roots_of_gentrification_how_19.html.

³ Emily Badger, *How the Whitest City in America Appears Through the Eyes of its Black Residents*, The Washington Post (March 24, 2015), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/24/how-the-whitest-city-in-america-appears-through-the-eyes-of-its-black-residents/?utm_term=.ef69eb5a3552.



In 2017, the median white *single* parent has 2.2 times more wealth than the median black *two*-parent household and 1.9 times more wealth than the median Latino *two*-parent household.⁴ Even when comparing exclusively black families, a disparity still exists in Oregon. A 2014 report by PSU and the Coalition of Communities of Color found that the average African American family's earnings in Oregon are lower than their national counterparts.⁵

Recently, the Oregonian reported that between 2012-2014 Portland's black population has declined by nearly 800 residents, even with the city's overall population experiencing rapid growth.⁶ What could be the cause of this decline? One clue: in Multnomah County, just 32% of African Americans own homes, as opposed to a rate of 45% nationally.⁷

HB 4010 seeks to identify and **eliminate** barriers that prevent Oregon's families of color from owning homes and building generational wealth. I hope you will support the important work this Bill will engender. And join us in the fight to make economic gains more equitable for all Oregon families. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Representative Janelle Bynum
House District 51

⁴ Amy Traub, Laura Sullivan, Tatjana Meschede, & Tom Shapiro, *The Asset Value of Whiteness: Understanding the Racial Wealth Gap*, Demos (Feb. 6, 2017), available at <http://www.demos.org/publication/asset-value-whiteness-understanding-racial-wealth-gap>.

⁵ Curry-Stevens, A., Cross-Hemmer, A., & Coalitions of Communities of Color (2014). *The African-American Community in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile*. Portland, OR: Portland State University.

⁶ Andrew Theen, *Portland Area Attracting New and Diverse Residents, But Black Population Dwindles*, OregonLive (Mar. 8, 2017), available at http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2017/03/post_585.html.

⁷ Alana Semuels, *The Racist History of Portland, the Whitest City in America*, The Atlantic (July 22, 2016), available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/07/racist-history-portland/492035/>.