



June 24, 2020

[Joint Committee on the First Special Session of 2020](#)

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97232

Dear Co-Chairs Courtney and Kotek, Vice-Chairs Girod and Drazan, and members of the committee,

George Floyd's tragic and senseless killing by a white police officer on a street in Minneapolis outrages all of us. Coming in close succession to the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, six years after Eric Garner met a similar fate on the streets of Staten Island, and after so many others who have lost their lives, we mourn not just for the families of the victims but the ideals of our nation. These and other less publicized atrocities inflicted against people of color are not isolated events, but instead reflect a society deeply in need of transformation and healing.

Racial disparities touch virtually all aspects of American life, and Oregonians have made it clear that they are done waiting. The protests in cities throughout the nation, including in Eugene and Portland, show the pain and the desire for us to do more, do better, and adopt new approaches to equity.

The University of Oregon is home to nearly 23,000 students and more than 10,000 employees based in Eugene and Portland. 33% of our student body identify as students of color, and many of our faculty and staff identify as Black, Indigenous or people of color. As a community, we aim to be a place where change can occur through the free exchange of ideas and we can help create equitable economic opportunity for the next generation of Oregonians. While we have made progress in recent years, it is vital that we confront and recognize our own history with racism at the UO and recommit ourselves to supporting, recruiting, and retaining our Black students, faculty, alumni, and staff.

It is in this context that I strongly support the call from Oregon's People of Color Caucus for the Legislature to listen to our communities of color in Oregon. I support the inclusion of their voices on policy proposals that will help to address the systemic racism that exists in our public safety system.

This includes legislation that would prohibit an arbitrator from lessening disciplinary action against a law enforcement officer if the arbitrator and the law enforcement agency determine that the officer has committed misconduct (SB 1567A, 2020); legislation that would authorize and require the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute, if the



evidence dictates, any death or serious physical injury resulting from the use of force by a law enforcement officer, and finally; and the formation of a bipartisan work group to recommend changes to the state's laws regarding use of physical force.

These steps are necessary, but not sufficient. At the UO, we look forward to engaging in this continued and vital work of dismantling systemic racism in our communities, and to being a part of the solution to ensure we are investing in critical community development and social programs for Black, Indigenous, and people of color that will prevent police brutality and ensure police are trusted and accountable members of our society.

If the university can be helpful to lawmakers in this endeavor, we stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Schill". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael H. Schill
President and Professor of Law
University of Oregon