

March 28, 2019

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Committee on Business and General Government
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Chair Riley and Members of the Senate Committee on Business and General Government,

My name is Christel Allen, I am a resident of Senate District 22. I would like to share my support for Senate Bill 933 and respectfully request your help in passing this important piece of legislation.

As a person whose racial and ethnic background is not easily identifiable, I spent the majority of my life struggling to answer the question of, "what are you?" from both friends and strangers. The majority of these questions have come from those whose racial identities live within clear boundaries. I believe that the majority of these questions did not come with ill-intent, but constantly having your appearance be the first and sometimes only quality of interest to others (something I had no control in creating or contributing to) had a lasting impact on my personal worth.

I remember the first time I was forced to question my identity was as a third grader at Salem Heights Elementary School. I was filling out a placement test for the talented and gifted program and found myself unable to answer this question before I even started the real test.

I believe this bill will help more adequately and accurately inform demographic data that can help our state better identify barriers and disparities related to race and ethnicity. We can use this critical information to improve health outcomes, as well as access to education and economic opportunities. It is more than possible for Oregon to make the necessary improvements to our data systems, as the U.S. Census has allowed individuals to identify multiple races and ethnicities since 2000. Nearly 20 years later, Oregon simply needs to prioritize a population that is currently discounted and/or incorrectly identified.

From 1970 to 2013, the percentage of children born to multiracial families in the United States has increased ten-fold.¹ As our own state continues to become more diverse, I believe the multiracial population of our state is owed the simple recognition that is afforded to most other populations in all of our institutions. More data improvements can and should be made in order for all Oregonians to be recognized and, quite literally, counted. SB 933 is a step in the right direction and I hope members of the committee will vote to ensure its passage.

Sincerely,

Christel Allen

¹ <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/>