

Kate Brown
Governor



Oregon Commission on Black Affairs
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August 10, 2020
Joint Committee On The Second Special Session of 2020
Testimony in support of House Bill 4304 (Section 41) on decoupling of CARES
funds for the purpose of culturally specific service

Co-Chairs Courtney and Kotek and Members of the Joint Committee On The Second
Special Session of 2020:

The Oregon Commission on Black Affairs met on at its August regular meeting to consider its priorities for the Special Session 2 and beyond. There are several legislative actions that we feel have high need to advance in the short term, a number of which are tied to desperately needed funding opportunities which could be considered as tied to the budget related bills at the top of the Special Session agenda. We share your conviction that government can do more by leveraging the funds they have in fresh ways to infuse culturally specific approaches into budgeting and funding.

OCBA strongly supports Oregon Housing and Community Services request for flexibility to allow culturally specific organizations and others to receive housing support resources utilizing a competitive process, including the flexibility provided in House Bill 4304 (Section 41). Particularly as ESG (Emergency Service Grants) from the CARES Act provides more flexibility than the traditional pathway for funding which has historically, fallen far short in its goals associated with funding minority and culturally specific projects. Times has shown that there must be better paths to funding Oregon's communities' needs.

As you know, BIPOC communities are some of our most vulnerable during times of crisis, and have historically been marginalized from receiving the state and federal resources our communities pay into and desperately need now. OCBA noted in its Saturday discussion that along with the burden COVID has placed on our communities, and especially African immigrant families, that our communities have stepped up their response efforts to meet the need, absent government support. Commissioners Djimet Dogo and Musse Olol, of Africa House and the Somali community respectively, spoke to us about such community efforts including volunteering the use of RV's to help crowded family homes allow better isolating of those infected, delivering donated dinners prepared in traditional ways, and other examples.

We can do this, and OCBA thanks you for your consideration of this request from a trusted source of community focused success within state government.

Sincerely,

Lawanda Joy Manning MBA, Chair

Mariotta Gary-Smith, Vice-Chair

OR Commission on Black Affairs

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Lawanda Manning

Vice Chair:
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Benjamin Duncan
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Musse Olol

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