

**Public testimony by Kim Stafford, former Poet Laureate of Oregon (2018-2020), and Oregon writer.**

2 February 2021

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Testimony/HRULES>

Dear Oregon Legislators,

Having studied your bills HCR 11 and HCR 2329 (the Salinas bill) regarding replacing or modifying the Oregon State Song, I see replacement of the song as the only option worthy of our Oregon today.

The existing state song, as pointed out in both bills, includes racist and exclusionary language from a more primitive time in our state's history. Clearly, these elements can't stand. Beyond that, however, the whole fabric of the existing state song is crowded with cliches and generic phrases not sufficient for the true identity of Oregon. To have generations of young people in Oregon sing this kind of language is an insult to them, to Oregon, and to the true power of song to tell truth, to specify deep identity, and to inspire.

The Salinas bill provides a path to a better state song by a democracy of voices contributing to lyrics fresh and true. This is a time of reckoning for our nation and our state, a perfect time to invite Oregon, writers, musicians, and citizens to find a way to say and then to sing who we are and who we want to be.

I spend every day writing and revising poems to accompany, console, engage, and inspire my fellow Oregonians. In this process, I become ever more aware of what truth sounds like, and how the heart and mind can converge in a text that makes us kind, generous, and proud in community. The existing state song, the whole song, fails this task.

Please pass the Salinas bill to give the full community of Oregon a chance to sing who we are.

Sincerely,



Kim Stafford  
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