

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO
JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT
Wednesday, March 3, 2021
Sharon Gary-Smith, President
NAACP Portland 1120B Branch**

Co-Chairs Golden and Smith and Members of the Committee,

I am Sharon Gary-Smith, president of the NAACP, Portland 1120B Branch, and I'm here today to express our branch and my personal support for the request by the Joint Advocacy Commissions of Oregon for appropriate and necessary funding support.

Oregon is a state whose history – past and current – reminds us all that the fight for equality, representation, safety and equal voices continues to be a long and even protracted fight.

The Oregon Advocacy Commission's Office and the 4 individual commissions actively conduct their mandated tasks to advocate, conduct public policy research, provide leadership development and enter partnerships that can elevate and amplify the quest for real racial and social justice in our state. They do all of this while receiving minimal funding and limited administrative and support staff.

To me, they have been and continue to be substantially underfunded and understaffed, so the level of work produced is both hard to imagine and impressive.

I have heeded their calls to bring to the forefront demands to end excessive over policing in BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other people of color communities; to interrupt the hate and discrimination that continues unabated in far too many spaces around our state, to educate to eliminate the continuing intimidation and sexual harassment experienced by too many women and girls including, yes,

those working within the very halls of our Capitol. The sheer amount of work these commissions must do is substantial.

That's why, in my mind, the current budget request by the Joint Advocacy Commissions Office is unnecessarily small, even meager, if they're expected to continue answering the calls for voice and representation and real change from so many constituencies.

For far too long, the advocacy commissions have been under nourished yet expected to stand up for those who aren't counted. Therefore, I respectfully suggest that in this historical time of racial and social reckoning across the country and around the world, that Oregon return to being bold and innovative and that it must put our money where our priorities lie, ending racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia and allowing those commissions that actively address these issues to be resourced sufficient to make an even greater difference.

If Oregon is to truly become a state that raises its collective head high when the question is called: how well do you resource your fight for justice, then the joint advocacy commissions budget request is a good place to start lifting up, not down.

I want to see your investment in equity, in equal opportunity, be matched by your favorable commitment to investing in the joint advocacy commissions not just where they've asked, but even more to realize their true need.

In the end, what matters is not what was said, or what was promised, but whether our State delivers on the expectation it will 'do more and 'do better' in responding to injustices and supporting those who do the frontline and administrative work to ensure more successful outcomes in delivering racial and social equity to all. That is the work of the joint advocacy commissions.

Sincerely,

Sharon Gary-Smith
Portland, OR.