



March 10, 2021

To: The Oregon State Legislature

FR: The Multnomah County Democratic Party's Historical and Ongoing Anti-Blackness in Oregon Study Group

RE: Letter of Support for Senate Bill 683

Thank you for hearing SB 683, the Anti-Racism Curriculum Act (ARCA). SB 683 requires school districts throughout Oregon to provide instruction on the multigenerational trauma and plunder of Black Americans in this state and country. In addition, the bill requires the Department of Education to convene an advisory group made up of educators, historians, and experts to assist in adopting a set of anti-racist skills requirements to accompany the curricula. The Historical and Ongoing Anti-Blackness in Oregon study group has prioritized, and supports the enactment of this legislation.

The Black experience in Oregon is unique in that Oregon is a former “sundown” state that, for many years legally excluded Black residents. The consequences of that state policy manifests itself in the present day racial demographics of our state. A little over [two percent](#) of Oregonians identify as Black. Our small numbers often leave us voiceless and powerless in the face of institutionalized racism. Though many of the damages caused by racist policies of the past cannot be adequately redressed with legislation, legislation can be used to create a better future. In order to get to that better future, we must implement policies that revolutionize and transform institutions. As an advocacy group whose mission is to improve the lives of Black Oregonians through policy, we believe SB 683 achieves our mission in the sphere of public education.

For too long, the U.S. public school system and America at-large have engaged in the minimization and at times, outright denial of [slavery, Jim Crow, and ongoing atrocities associated with post-Civil Rights legislation of the 1960's](#). SB 683 will lay the foundation for dismantling our culture of denial by teaching the truth about the sustained and systemic oppression African Americans have and continue to face in this country from 1619 to the present. The ARCA will also give students the anti-racism skills necessary to identify and root out everyday racism, which is key to creating the better future that many of us desire. Another benefit of institutionalizing SB 683 will be the increased engagement and opportunities the curriculum is certain to bring for Oregon's African American students and other students of color.

While the tribal history (SB 13), Holocaust (SB 664) and Inclusive Education (HB 2023) laws mandate teaching the histories of specific minority groups, no state statute specifically mandates robust curriculum on the history of racism against Black Americans. Thousands of individual Oregonians, Oregon companies, corporations, non-profits, and countless Oregon lawmakers have declared that ‘Black Lives Matter.’ However, we must ensure that ‘Black Lives Matter’ isn’t just the latest catchy political slogan or an empty hashtag. We must ensure that the policies we implement reflect that Black lives matter. Education is an essential component of the multi-pronged effort necessary to ensure that Black lives matter and SB 683 mandates that education.

My name is Quinton Blanton, leader of the Historical and Ongoing Anti-Blackness study group, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss in more detail the ARCA with you. It is easiest to reach me at (503) 933-2275 or qblanton09georgefox.edu. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 683. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

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