

We are submitting testimony in strong support of HB 2329, an effort led by Crystal Akins to adopt an inclusive Oregon state song contest.

In our family, we have mixed ancestry: Indigenous, white, and Black. In our nuclear family unit, three of us were born on the land that is currently called Oregon. I (Zapoura) personally have relatives who came to Oregon in the early 1900s cooking for loggers and others who arrived in the mid-1850s for reasons unknown to me. We have history here but we are not Indigenous to this place.

My 11-year-old daughter, 9-year-old son, their dad, and I listened to the Oregon state song together. We all recoiled at the lyrics, talking about the way the language of empire and conquering is really coded racist ideology. While we know that the institution of Oregon was built upon racist ideas and continues to operate on many of those founding principles, we are hopeful that we will choose to lean into anti-racist practice and to dismantle the racist structures that are so violent and harmful to our community. Replacing the state song with something newly visioned is a small but important part of that process. We support this move forward.

However, we are disappointed that the process of making a change to the state song has not yet centered the voices of Black, Indigenous, and other folx of color who call Oregon their home and ask that this process be reconsidered. Modifying the original song lyrics with those written by Amy Donna Shapiro is a missed opportunity for us to lean toward the inclusivity referenced in HCR11. We cannot continue to exclude our BIPOC communities' voices. Instead, let us take this as a time to offer an opportunity to all Oregonians to participate in a process for a new state song together.

Please show us that those in positions of power in our state are more committed to repair than harm; acknowledging Oregon's real past and present and help us to work together for a more just future. We urge the committee to support HB 2329. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

*The Newton Family
Zapoura, Farnell, Vera (age 11), and Quincy (age 9)*