

Date: March 23, 2021
Re: Support for HB 2337

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chair Drazan, Vice Chair Holvey, and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

As a parent and public health advocate, I am writing to request your support for HB 2337.

HB 2337 declares what we know: racism is a public health crisis, in Oregon and nationwide. This bill gives us a chance to make a meaningful difference in the healthcare received by Oregonians.

Oregon's history includes a legacy of racism, with impacts of trauma passed down across generations. But racism is not only in our past. Our current context challenges the social determinants of health for many members of BIPOC communities, through discrimination in housing, education, and employment, and disproportionate contacts with the justice and child welfare systems.

Healthcare is one of the spaces where Oregonians face the impacts of racism. BIPOC communities face greater burdens from chronic disease, maternal mortality, and even years of potential life lost. We have seen the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 play out this past year. Communities of color are less likely to be insured. Chronic stress and trauma, as from racism, also magnify risk of mental health challenges.

I appreciate the work of the Oregon Health Equity Task Force in advancing this bill to focus public health on meeting the pressing needs of our neighbors.

Thank you for the consideration of this important issue. I urge you to support HB 2337.

Sincerely,
Rev. Audrey Zunkel-deCoursey