

Date: 3/22/1994

Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Dana Merrill. I am a public health professional at Oregon Public Health Association in Clackamas, OR. I am writing to request your support for HB2337.

HB 2337 declares racism a public health crisis in Oregon. Racism causes harm, trauma, illness, and death to Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) Oregonians. HB 2337 acknowledges that Oregon's very founding as a state was rooted in racist ideals, and the damaging impact of these and other racist policies continue to exist within our present-day policies and systems. Further, this bill signals the need for accelerated, intentional actions to heal these injustices and articulates six initial strategies and investments to address health inequities.

This past year has forced a conversation we have been having in public health for years. It's time to put action to our words of promising for a more equal and equitable society. Racism is pervasive and is integrated into every institution and system that is connected to the social determinants of health, and ultimately impacts Oregonian's ability to be healthy and well to the fullest potential. White supremacy was institutionalized through the development of policies and systems that ensure power, privilege and resources remain in the hands of white men. While not all racist policies are intentional anymore, the first step is to acknowledge how people are still being harmed by them regardless of intention.

HB 2337 was developed by the Oregon Health Equity Task Force which is composed of leaders and community-based organizations representing BIPOC, Tribal, and Immigrant and Refugee communities and includes six initial strategies that are responsive to the specific needs of their communities to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities.

During my time working at OPHA, I have seen first hand the community driven process of the task force and the importance of REAL-D data collection. As I've worked with REAL-D in the past year, I can recognize the need to ensure our data collection represents and captures those beyond what has previously been the 'default white'.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service. I urge you to support HB 2337.

Sincerely,
Dana Merrill
Clackamas, OR
Oregon Public Health Association