

Date: 3/22/2021

Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Sarah Butler. I am a member of Ainsworth United Church of Christ in Portland. 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 Oregonians who are Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asians, and all other People of Color. HB 2337 acknowledges that the state of Oregon was created on stolen Indigenous land, and was rooted in racist laws and principles. The damaging impact 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.

Racism is baked into all of our institutions and systems - it is pervasive and can be insidious. There is ample research and evidence that clearly shows that Black people have more chronic illness and shorter life spans because of the disparate health services and increased trauma they experience from discrimination. Until we change our systems and institutions to be anti-racist we will continue to harm Oregonians with disparate education, healthcare, policing, employment, housing, etc. Every Oregonian, regardless of race, should have equitable access to resources.

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.

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

Sincerely,
Sarah Butler
Portland