



Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Incorporated in Oregon

DATE: March 21, 2021

TO: Honorable Representative Rachel Prusak, Chair
Representatives Andrea Salinas and Cedric Hayden, Vice Chairs
And Members of the House Committee on Health Care

FROM: Sherri L. Alderman, MD, MPH, IMHM-E® Policy & Clinical, FAAP
Oregon Pediatric Society Member

SUBJECT: Strong Support of HB 2337 - Racism is a Public Health Crisis

My name is Sherri Alderman, and I am a Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician with specialized expertise in public health and infant and early childhood mental health. I am the Chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Early Childhood and a board member of the Oregon Pediatric Society. Based on the research, my expertise, and my professional experiences, I strongly support HB 2337, *Racism Is a Public Health Crisis*. The Oregon Pediatric Society board of directors also endorses this bill.

Racism is systemic. A plethora of research shows that racism in our society is ubiquitous and permeates every aspect of society.

“Racism inequities are so deeply ingrained in American society that they are nearly invisible.”

(Sue, et al. 2007)

Racism is toxic to early childhood brain development. Racism cuts through the shield of early relational health rendering an infant and young child unprotected from its adversity.

Racism is an adverse childhood experience. Young children of color experience racism vicariously, internalize it, and unknowingly develop racist attitudes against their own race. This is a tragedy.

Racism is a social determinant of health. Children of color develop poorer health, poor self-esteem, eroded resilience, lowered academic performance, reduced adult productivity, and increased involvement with law enforcement and incarceration (Trent, et al. 2019, Pachter, Gracia-Coll 2009, Priest, et al. 2013, Paradies, et al. 2015).

Racism saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources.

(Jones, et al. 2008)



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There are many ways that racism can be addressed. The first is acknowledging that racism is a public health crisis. With that fundamental shift, we can then provide educate, increase awareness, hold everyone accountable to conscious and unconscious racist attitudes and behaviors, address institutional racism, enrich and advance the equitable efforts for which Oregon is so well-known nationally, and make policy and practice changes that thoughtfully and intentionally align our social fabric to truly reflect our principles and declared beliefs that promote inclusion, value diversity, and realize equitable opportunities. In so doing, we will improve the health and well-being of all Oregonians.

“The assumption that things can get better, with the expectation that they should, creates the kind of social ferment that yields progress.”

(Marilynne Robinson)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sherri A.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sherri L. Alderman, MD, MPH, IMHM-E® Policy & Clinical, FAAP