

Date: 3/23/2021

Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Rebecca Dooley-Rhuman. I am a 2nd grade teacher in Salem-Keizer School district in Salem, 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.

In the education field especially, racial justice requires the formation and purposeful reinforcement of policies, practices, ideologies and behaviors that create equitable power, access, opportunity, treatment, and outcomes for all people regardless of race and redistribute resources to invest where inequities are greatest.

As a teacher, I assert that this issue is not about politics. This issue is about people's lives and their health, and the fact that people are dying far earlier than they should, and that we must do a much better job of preventing that. At an educational level, we need to reconsider some of the policies that make it harder for our students who are Black, Latinx or other races. We should consider how to train and hire more teachers and support staff who represent the communities their schools are in.

Racism is the reason why COVID-19 has hit communities of color harder. In Oregon, Latinos represent nearly 40% of COVID-19 cases, despite the fact that they only comprise about 13% of the population. (Oregon Health Authority, 2020. COVID-19 Weekly Report: October 14, 2020).

Black and brown people are stopped, searched, arrested, prosecuted, and experience more force and are killed by police at higher rates nationally. (APHA, 2018, Addressing law enforcement violence as a public health issue). This is a major area we need to call for change in our state and nationally.

This effort will look like many similar ones out there. Racism didn't happen overnight and with one action and dismantling systematic racism will take many years, multiple legislative concepts, policies, and community pushes. Let's begin to make those changes NOW.

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. As a white female, I can't fully understand what changes need to be made, but we should begin by listening to the groups who represent the marginalized people groups in our state. As we listen to them, we can understand how we can do a better job making sure their needs are met in our state, too.

1. Expand and support the collection of REAL-D data
2. Meaningfully invest in community engagement to identify future strategies
3. Health Equity Policy Analyst to disrupt policy from maintaining racist outcomes
4. Increase health equity through language access
5. Increase community voice in the legislative process
6. Remove barriers to increase access and quality of care in BIPOC communities

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

Sincerely,
Rebecca Dooley-Rhuman
Salem, OR