



Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest, Inc.

A Non-Profit Organization

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Oyate Administration

1776 SW Madison St.
Portland, OR 97205
[p] 503-224-1044
[f] 503-274-4251

Residential Treatment Services

17645 NW St. Helens Hwy.
Portland, OR 97231
[p] 503-621-1069
[f] 503-621-0200

Outpatient Treatment Services

1631 SW Columbia St.
Portland, OR 97201
[p] 503-231-2641
[f] 503-231-1654

Tate' Topo

1310 SW 17th Ave.
Portland, OR 97201
[p] 503-231-2641
[f] 503-467-4077

Totem Lodge

1438 SE Division
Portland, OR 97202
[p] 503-548-0346
[f] 503-232-5959

Dental Clinic

12750 SE Stark St., Building E
Portland, OR 97233
[p] 971-347-3009
[f] 971-256-3277

Indian Health Clinic

15 N Morris St.
Portland, OR 97227
[p] 503-230-9875
[f] 503-230-9877

Wellness Center

12360 E. Burnside St. 2nd Floor
Portland, OR 97233
[p] 971-279-4800
[f] 971-279-2051

Child, Youth & Family Programs and Youth Residential Treatment Center

620 NE 2nd Street
Gresham, OR 97030
[p] 971-274-3757
[f] 503-921-5740

Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner – Chair
Republican Leader Christine Drazan – Vice-Chair
House Committee on Rules
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Public hearing for HB2337 on March 23, 2021.

Chair Smith Warner and Vice-Chair Drazan:

I am writing to ask for your strong support of HB 2337.

HB 2337 declares racism as a public health crisis in Oregon. Racism causes harm, trauma, illness, and death to tribes, tribal people and people of color in Oregon. 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.

Racism is pervasive, integrated, and institutionalized into the foundational systems that are connected to the social determinants of health, and that ultimately impact Oregonian's ability to be healthy and well to the fullest potential.

The Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest (NARA) provides education, physical and mental health services and substance abuse treatment that is culturally appropriate to American Indians, Alaska Natives and anyone in need. NARA's approach is collaborative, and strengths based. Native American culture and spirituality informs our work and is offered to all of our clients. We base our work on the medicine wheel, integrating health and wellness, mental health, sobriety, and culture. These services are offered at each of our sites. Referrals and support are provided as needed.

Institutional racism is the reason that even when you control for educational attainment and income inequality that people of color still experience higher rates of health inequities and average years of life lost. (Colen, Ramey, Cooksey, Williams. (2018)). Racism is the reason why COVID-19 has hit communities of color harder. Nationally American Indian and Alaska Natives have consistently led or been in the top two out of all races and ethnicities in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths throughout the COVID-19 epidemic.

Health inequities are preventable issues that when addressed provide significant cost savings not only to health systems, but also other systems related to the social determinants of health. More importantly, addressing these issues of racism improves the health and quality of life for all Oregonians. This effort will look like many similar ones out there. Racism didn't happen overnight and with one action and dismantling systemic racism will take many years, multiple legislative concepts, policies, and community pushes.

Incidents of racism coupled with historical trauma consistently experienced by tribes, tribal people, and people of color in Oregon create inequities in social, health, economic, legal, and academic outcomes. As community advocates who study social determinants of health, we seek systems change guided by our community's voice. Our goal is to address the inequities in people's lives, their health, and prevent premature death. This bill represents a first step in addressing these inequities for our community.

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

Sincerely,

Jackie Mercer
Chief Executive Officer

