



**Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council**  
6401 SE Foster ▪ Portland, OR 97206

March 23, 2021

Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2337 to declare racism a public health crisis. My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 85,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

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. This bill 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.

Oregon has deep roots of racism which includes: the Land Donation Act of 1850 that made it legal to steal land from Native American Tribes, the 1887 murder of Chinese miners, Black exclusionary laws with lashing as punishment, Japanese internment camps during WWII, segregation in education, and real estate red-lining that drove down values and reduced home ownership in the Black community. This has left a legacy of trauma from one generation to the next, impacting Oregon Tribes and BIPOC communities through a cumulative effect, and creating racial disparities in social, health, economic, legal, and academic outcomes.

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. It has created a situation that is untenable and where immediate action must be taken to mitigate further harm and violence against BIPOC Oregonians and Tribes. The immediate action we need 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.

In our union, we believe in and fight for our vision for a just society: where all workers are valued and all people respected, no matter where we are from or the color of our skin; where all families and communities can thrive; and where we leave a more just and equitable world for generations to come. Inequities in our health system are preventable issues that we must address in order to improve the health and quality of life for all Oregonians.

Racism didn't happen overnight nor with one single action; therefore, dismantling systemic racism will take many years, community pushes, and multiple legislative concepts/policies; policies such as this one. **SEIU Oregon urges you to vote yes on HB 2337.**

Thank you,

Alberto Gallegos  
Political and Government Relations Organizer  
SEIU, Oregon State Council