



March 24, 2021

To Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Members of the House Committee on Rules:

My name is Akashdeep Singh and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager at OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon.

OPAL's mission is to organize people and activate leaders. A foundational principle of the organization is a recognition of the multitude of disparities faced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color: in access to decision-making processes, in receiving environmental benefits to outweigh the disproportionate burdens of environmental degradation, in health.

The effects of racism on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are numerous, profound, and all too real. It affects our ability to safely exist in our own neighborhoods, whether we are embarking upon an afternoon walk, using public transit to get to work, or picking up dinner from a local community restaurant struggling in the pandemic. The stories of our community members suffering from racism and white supremacy are too many, each heartbreaking and infuriating in their own right.

OPAL's offices are located in the Jade District on SE 82nd Avenue in Portland, Oregon. The Jade District is a historic, ethnically and linguistically diverse neighborhood with a rich and vibrant Asian community. Our community members and businesses have suffered greatly in the pandemic and not just from the virus and difficulties in vaccination.

Anti-Asian xenophobia and bigotry have sharply increased during the pandemic. This xenophobia and bigotry is certainly not new. It is part of a shameful American historical fabric that includes the 1887 murder of Chinese miners, Japanese internment camps during World War II, and explicit anti-Asian immigration laws. But the incidents of hate crimes have skyrocketed in this pandemic and our communities deserve protection.

HB 2337 takes the important step to not just recognize the harms racism and white supremacy have, are, and will continue to inflict on our communities; but also takes active measures to mitigate their impacts. It is a start towards the important work we have to do to protect our communities and we are honored to support such a vital step.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

*Akashdeep Singh*

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