



April 27, 2021

To: Senator Wagner and members of the Senate Committee on Rules

FR: The Multnomah County Democratic Party's Historical and Ongoing Anti-Blackness In Oregon Study Group.

**RE: Letter of Support for House Bill 2168**

Hello Senator Wagner and members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

My name is Quinton Blanton and I am the study group lead of the Multnomah County Democratic Party's Historical and Ongoing Anti-Blackness In Oregon study group. Our mission is to spearhead and lobby for legislation that will improve the lives of Black Oregonians. Thank you for hearing HB 2168, which establishes Juneteenth as a legal state holiday. The Historical and Ongoing Anti-Blackness In Oregon study group has prioritized, and supports the enactment of this legislation. Plank five of our article states: " we strongly support corrective and restorative justice for past racial harms inflicted by local, city, and state government against ADOS in Oregon. While passing HB 2168 is not redress, it is a small, but meaningful act that can give the people of Oregon a deeper understanding and appreciation of the American Black freedom struggle.

Last year, in the wake of the George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery killings, our nation experienced a racial reckoning that forced it to look itself in the mirror and authentically grapple with the white supremacy and anti-Blackness that undergirds it, particularly as it relates to the descendants of American slavery. One of the byproducts of last summer's racial unrest was a renewed and increased interest in Juneteenth. Juneteenth commemorates the date June 19, 1865 when Union general Gordon Granger informed enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, months after the surrender of General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Court House, that they were officially free due to the Emancipation Proclamation. Last summer, not only did Black Americans celebrate Juneteenth with a revitalized fervor and vigor, countless businesses, corporations, institutions of higher learning, government agencies, and non-profits acknowledged and celebrated the holiday as well. I found this development fascinating as a descendant of slavery who grew up celebrating what often seemed like an obscure holiday to non-Black Americans.

For American Blacks, Juneteenth is a day for us to tell our stories with pride, acknowledge our ancestors, and remind ourselves of our collective power. For non-Black Americans, Juneteenth should be a day to celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of their

Black compatriots, as well as serve as a reminder of the work that has yet to be done to eradicate anti-Blackness from the fabric of our country, and make the descendants of U.S. slavery whole.

Establishing Juneteenth as a legal holiday is fitting recognition for a people who created the wealth of this nation, endured multigenerational plunder, fought in every major American war, and contributed tremendously to the literature, art, agricultural skills, cuisine, clothing styles, music, language, and social and technological advances of American culture.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss HB 2168 in more detail with you. It is easiest to reach me at (503) 933-2275 or [qblanton09@georgefox.edu](mailto:qblanton09@georgefox.edu). Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2168. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

---

The Multnomah County Democratic Party's Historical and Ongoing Anti-Blackness In Oregon