

22 February 2021

To: Joint Committee on Transportation

Re: House Bill 2985

Dear Co-Chairs Representative McClain & Senator Beyer, Co-Vice Chairs Senator Boquist and Representative Noble, and members of the Committee:

While it may sound like a good idea at first glance, I am opposed to HB 2985 and urge you not pass this misguided legislation. Just where is it written that this approach is not already the default position (in choosing advisory committee members)? ODOT's Mission Statement already states that it, "recognizes the many benefits of a workplace environment that values and embraces individual differences. In fact, diversity and inclusion are one of our core values."

While disparities may be found, that disparity does not necessarily equal discrimination and the degree to which this false assumption is driving current discussions of injustice—and legislation—merits a clear refutation. Why is the Committee taking up its valuable time to re-invent the wheel?

If the bill is about equity it is about ethics and it is about morality and all already know that from antiquity it has been noted that, "government cannot legislate morality."

Equity-pushers (for lack of a better label) take it for granted that if all positions at every level in every organization are not occupied by a proportion of the population that is precisely equivalent to that proportion in the general population that systematic prejudice must be at play. This is a false assumption, and legislation based on such is unlikely to have the results intended.

This is some form of identity politics in which government agencies will be empowered to re-organize society to achieve a certain preordained outcome. The big question is, who is saying what that preordained outcome should be?

The supporters of HB 2985 are insisting that Oregon is in need of someone to run things fairly, to iron out the inequities, to take care of the needy, to check and penalize the bad guys, and currently to regulate 'hate' and 'intolerance,' to always keep the public good in mind. Then they anoint themselves to carry out this necessary task.

Sincerely,



Richard Wisner