



Date: February 3rd, 2022
To: House Committee on Education
From: Ronnie Strode, Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Racial Equity and Justice Youth Collaborative 2022, HB 4099

Chair Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Ronnie Strode, and I am a Policy Analyst with the Urban League of Portland and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 4099. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African-Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security and quality of life. We do this by investing in stable housing; through workforce development; community health; education and well-being; for our youth, adults, and seniors. Our culturally specific programs and services, combined with our powerful advocacy and civic engagement, empowers Black communities to thrive across Oregon and SW Washington.

To date, our state historically and currently has instituted policies and systems that have perpetuated systems of iniquity and discrimination. Though we have moved to improve those policies so those populations most impacted by discrimination are centered and provided protections both at the state and federal level, there remains disparities especially when it concerns youth, racial minorities, and members of the LGBT community. These barriers have prevented our communities from meaningfully participating in discussions on policy affecting their lives.

HB 4099 seeks to take a step toward reducing barriers to access to the policy process by establishing a Racial Equity and Justice Youth Collaborative. This collaborative will provide much needed representation for marginalized communities, especially the youth, by allowing underrepresented individuals to meaningfully advise in the creation and implementation of the policies and practices that impact their lives. Through the creation of this collaborative, we also make space and prepare our future leaders; leaders that will be reflective of the communities our legislature strikes to serve and who will come to the legislative body with vital lived experience and expertise.

Currently, Oregon lacks a youth majority-led body to advise on policy decisions based on their lived experiences. To change this dynamic, HB 4099 creates the Racial Equity and Justice Youth Collaborative with the intention of supporting diverse youth leaders in the policy-making process at the state level. By including youth who have been historically, and currently, underrepresented and underserved in the creation of policy, Oregon's laws and regulations will better represent its people.

The Urban League of Portland is urging this body to take swift legislative action by supporting HB 4099. The lack of representation for marginalized individuals and communities creates injustice and negatively impacts all Oregonians through the lack of



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diverse thoughts and ideas when crafting policy. HB 4099 takes a strong step toward rectifying these historical harms; Oregonians are counting on you.

Respectfully,

Ronnie Strode
Policy Analyst
Urban League of Portland
Portland, OR 97227
Phone: 503.280.2600