



**Advocating for Equity and Diversity
throughout Oregon**
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Senate Committee on Labor and Business
Joint Testimony in Support of SB 1579
February 10, 2022

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Knopp, and Senators Hansell,
Jama, and Lieber,

As leaders and members of the Oregon Advocacy
Commissions, we call upon the Committee to support the
passage of SB 1579, which implements an Economic Equity
Investment Program.

On behalf of

- The Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific
Islander Affairs;
- The Oregon Commission on Black Affairs;
- The Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs; and
- The Oregon Commission for Women,

we stand together in supportive solidarity for SB 1579.

1. The Oregon Advocacy Commissions work individually
and in concert to ensure economic, social, political, and legal equity for underrepresented
and often marginalized communities. We do this through advocacy, public policy research,
leadership development, and partnerships.

**Oregon Commission on
Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs**

Susan Soonkeum Cox, Co-Chair
Jacqueline Leung, Co-Chair
Vice-Chair Toc Soneoulay-Gillespie
Legislative Members:
Senator Michael Dembrow
Representative Khanh Pham

**Oregon Commission
on Black Affairs**

Mariotta Gary-Smith, Chair
Dr. Angela Addae, Esq., Vice-Chair
Legislative Member:
Senator James I. Manning, Jr.

**Oregon Commission
on Hispanic Affairs**

Jonathan Chavez Baez, Chair
Ashley Espinoza Valdez, Vice-Chair
Legislative Member:
Representative Andrea Salinas

Oregon Commission for Women

Natasha Haunsperger, Chair
Dr. Krista Parent, Vice-Chair
Legislative Members:
Senator Deb Patterson
Representative Sheri Schouten

**Oregon Advocacy Commissions
Office Staff**

Albert Lee, Executive Director
Nancy Kramer, Policy & Research
Dr. Kyl Myers, Public Affairs



2. Today, the Oregon Advocacy Commissions write jointly on this bill. Together, we feel strongly and would like to share our thoughts. In our statutory role of bringing equity focus and community voice into Oregon policy making, the Oregon Advocacy Commissions strongly support SB 1579.

This bill brings forth a meaningful and comprehensive framework that considers the historical trauma and damage that Oregon’s Indigenous, Black, Latinx and Asian communities have endured. The Equity Investment Fund is a response to redress the discrimination caused by Oregon’s history of racism that began before it became a U.S. state. SB 1579 would provide support, utilizing an economic and social justice lens, towards funding culturally specific programs that support BIPOC communities. This includes programs that would provide fair and just land and homeownership, workforce development, and entrepreneurship for communities who have been systematically excluded.

Oregon’s history as a racist state is nothing new, yet many Oregon residents are unaware of the past and present harm caused by Oregon’s policies. In 1850, the Donation Land Claim Act resulted in the stealing of 2.8 million acres of Indigenous land for white immigrants who settled in Oregon.¹ In the 1800s, Oregon’s Constitution and Legislature enacted extreme Black Exclusion Laws² including the inability for any free Black person to live or own homes in the state and the punishment by whipping of Black persons who remained in the state for each month they remained in Oregon. The former remained in the Constitution until 2001 while the latter remained until the late 1920s.³

¹ Notarianni, John. [“The US government took land of Oregon’s native people 170 years ago this week.”](#) OPB. Sept. 27, 2020.

² [“Black in Oregon 1840-1870.”](#) State Archives. Oregon Secretary of State.

³ Hare, Wayne. [“Portland’s gentrification has its roots in racism.”](#) High Country News. May 28, 2018.



During World War II, the passage of Executive Order 9066, forced Japanese-Americans into internment camps. Many, when released, returned to a home that was no longer theirs.⁴ Black migrants moved to Oregon during WWII, for work in the shipyard and railroad. They mostly settled along the Columbia River in Vanport, a federal housing project. On Memorial Day, 1948, there was a massive flood that displaced the Vanport residents. Due to redlining and restrictive covenants, there were limited places for Black residents to live, so they mostly resettled in the Albina District in inner North/Northeast Portland. Throughout the 1950s to 1970s, Albina residents experienced other forms of de jure displacement, surrounding the construction of the Memorial Coliseum (Blazers original stadium), Interstate 5, and Emanuel Hospital.

Today, the harm to BIPOC communities continues, such as the urban renewal projects that resulted in new housing developments or new freeways and overpasses at the expense of the forced removal of Black families from their homes. This resulted in significant housing shortages for Black families and the gentrification of neighborhoods.

SB 1579 proposes a holistic, comprehensive and culturally respectful framework for economic enhancements and improved access to economic-based resources and opportunities for Oregon's historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities and business entities. Modeling grants infrastructure and accessibility, creating a set of checks and balances and necessary guardrails to ensure the development and implementation of this Bill is equitable, truly signals a clear message that Business Oregon is committed to economic justice advocacy.

Economic justice intersects race, gender, and ethnic inequalities, and this bill proposes the removal of such structural and systemic obstacles and leads the way to self-resiliency, self-empowerment which then translates to economically thriving and prosperous communities

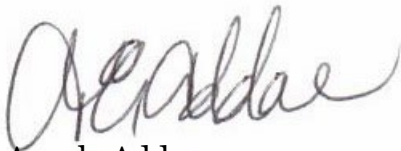
⁴ ["Oregon's Japanese Americans Learn Their Fate."](#) State Archives. Oregon Secretary of State.



across our state. The passage of SB 1579 is one of many necessary steps to collectively address and reduce the enormous income and economic development gaps in our society.

Throughout Oregon's history as a state, it has adopted time and time again different measures, different mechanisms, to communicate “who belongs.” Many of these measures were embedded in the law and in legal institutions---they were endorsed by state agencies. The cumulative legacy of exclusion and displacement, the trauma of social, economic, and environmental harm, and the lack of access to educational and political opportunity requires redress. SB 1579 provides a pathway for reparative and distributive justice that can begin to reconcile this history and create wellness, and support our communities reaching their full potential.

Sincerely,



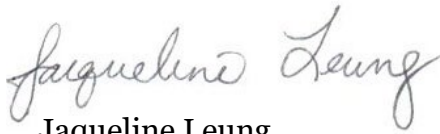
Angela Addae
Commissioner, OCBA



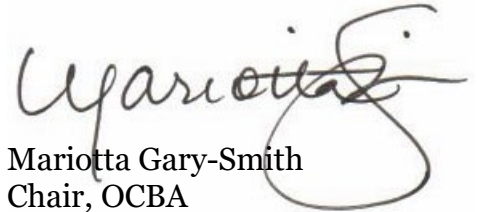
Ben Duncan
Commissioner, OCBA



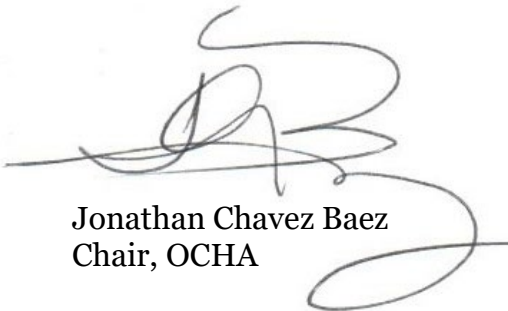
Susan Soonkeum Cox
Co-Chair, OCAPIA



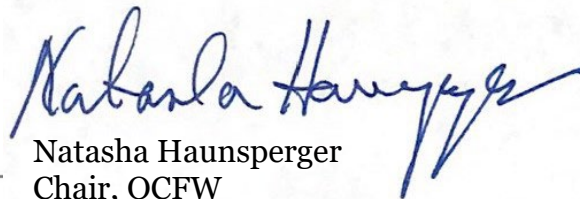
Jaqueline Leung
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Jonathan Chavez Baez
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Natasha Haunsperger
Chair, OCFW

