



Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

It is with gratitude that we collectively submit this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA). OCBA serves the people of Oregon to empower and support the African American and Black communities through our special roles as policy advisors to Oregon state policy makers and leaders. OCBA is a catalyst that empowers partnerships between state government and our community in rural and urban areas to ensure success for all African American and Black Oregonians by addressing longstanding and emerging issues at the policy level including but not limited to social, political, legal, and economic equity. OCBA has several statutory duties, all of which revolve around advocacy and equity.

As Black Oregonians, we have seen and experienced the cumulative burdens that have been the root of racial inequities play out in low income, communities of color, rural, and other vulnerable communities. Longstanding concerns with air pollution, lead exposure, and housing insecurity have combined with wildfires and heat waves, lack of access to healthful food, and a global health pandemic – that serve as a reminder that our work to create an Oregon where every resident can reach their full potential is still our collective challenge.

These challenges are exacerbated for Black populations when overlaid with data showing disparities in renters vs homeowners and the ongoing persistent and pervasive economic and racialized segregation and access to housing for Black Oregonians.

According to the “Recommendations of the Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities in Oregon” report to the State Legislature, the data shows that in Oregon, “people who identify as Black or African American are 2% of the total population, 4% of those in poverty, and 6% of those experiencing homelessness.”

Additionally, in the state of Oregon, more than 74% of Black/African Americans are renters, which is much greater than the national average of 53%, and that of White Oregonians (44%). Clearly Black Oregonians are disproportionately represented among renters overall, and thus overrepresented among those potentially facing eviction. The overrepresentation directly related to housing and economic policies in our state is clear for Black Oregonians.

SB 799 will reinstate safe-harbor time limits and decrease monthly evictions that rose to over 2,000 households in a 2022 report. The vast majority of eviction cases (77%) are due to nonpayment of rent

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(Evicted in Oregon). A 2021 article in the Willamette Week, written by Latisha Jensen, reports that Black renters used 57% of their income toward rent while only 26% of White household income, and those numbers are pre-pandemic data. In a 2020 report from Portland State, 53% of renters were cutting back on food and medication to pay rent. While SB 799 does not solve the overwhelming challenges of economic and racial justice, it does provide an opportunity to build upon the protections afforded to our most vulnerable and housing insecure renters by ensuring fewer evictions, fewer people displaced, and providing a reasonable time to catch up and identify and access assistance when necessary.

We strongly urge you to pass SB 799 and support our ongoing progress towards creating a more just, more equitable Oregon.


On behalf of the entire Oregon Commission on Black Affairs,



Erica Bailey, RN



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