



January 31, 2023

Re: Support for SB 1

Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Boquist, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 1. My name is Jenny Lee, and I am writing on behalf of the Coalition of Communities of Color, an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations dedicated to collective action for racial justice. The Coalition also houses the Research Justice Institute, whose work includes collaboration with dominant institutions, such as state agencies, to implement data justice strategies so that communities of color are better represented and served.

SB 1 will provide us with critical demographic information to help build a more equitable economy. This legislation will give taxpayers the opportunity to voluntarily select up to three racial and ethnic identities on their state income tax form. These identities will use the REAL-D definitions (Race, Ethnicity, Language, and Disability) that were developed by the Oregon Health Authority through an extensive process in collaboration with community-based organizations.

The ability to voluntarily self-identify using definitions that better capture the diversity both across and within communities of color is essential to accurate representation in data. No racial or ethnic group is a monolith. REAL-D definitions should be the standard for administrative data collection, and just as REAL-D data collection has helped Oregon advance health equity, self-reported data on racial and ethnic identity can help us build more equitable tax policies.

Right now, we are able to analyze the implications of our tax system for taxpayers based on geography and income, but we lack the information needed to understand the full picture of how our tax structure and expenditures impact communities of color. This information would help us develop strategies to reduce disparities and build an economy that works for all of us, including the communities who face the greatest economic injustices: Black, Indigenous, Latine, and Pacific Islander communities. By way of example, our Research Justice Institute's 2022 report on the racial wealth gap in Oregon would have greatly benefited from any state agency analysis of this data to craft specific policy recommendations to address wealth disparities. At the same time, we appreciate the stringent protections of this data that are included in this bill to prevent any misuse of the data, particularly in ways that could harm taxpayers of color.

On behalf of the Coalition of Communities of Color, I ask that you support SB 1 so Oregon can have the information we need to create a more equitable tax system and ultimately, a stronger economy for Oregonians and their families.

Thank you,
Jenny Lee, Deputy Director
Coalition of Communities of Color