



Oregon Commission on Black Affairs

Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon

Co-Chairs Patterson and Smith, and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government,

My name is Liz Fouter-Branch, I am a retired educator turned storyteller, archivist, and Equity Facilitator who has spent more than 40 years working for the arts and for youth development organizations. I also spent 20 years as a consultant on arts education programming and development, social justice, capacity building, and advocacy.

Right now, I serve as a Commissioner on the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs. OCBA serves the people of Oregon to empower and support the African American and Black community through our unique roles as policy advisors to Oregon state policymakers and leaders.

We do this through our statutory goals, which include:

- Advocating for equitable policies that assure the success of Oregon's African American and Black communities at the state level.
- Engaging community and state partners to promote equity for African American and Black communities statewide.
- Studying and analyzing issues affecting the African American and Black communities statewide and recommending policy remedies to state policy makers.
- Growing and developing leaders in the African American and Black communities at the state level in all branches.
- Increasing the viability and visibility of the contributions and achievements of Oregon's African American and Black communities statewide.

We actively engage in these statutory duties by focusing on our seven strategic priority areas: Education; jobs & the economy; healthcare; justice, safety & policing; stable families and housing; environmental Justice; and civic engagement.

That's a lot of work for one Commission to take on, but we could not do it without the support of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office. And they do this – and so much more – for four different Commissions, with a team of just four full time employees and three limited-duration employees.

HB5001 matters for two reasons:

**Oregon Commission on
Black Affairs**

Chair:

Jessica Price, Esq.

Vice-Chair:

Dr. Silky Booker (H.C.)

Commissioners:

Djimet Dogo
Benjamin Duncan
Liz Fouter-Branch
Erica Bailey

Legislative Members:


Senator James I. Manning
Representative Travis Nelson


**Oregon Advocacy Commissions
Office Staff**

Albert Lee, Executive Director
Iyesha Rosser, Policy & Research
Saba Saleem, Public Affairs
Ava Stevens, Executive Support



<https://www.oregonadvocacy.org/> 

503.302.9725 

oaco.mail@oregon.gov 

PO Box 17550, Portland, OR 97217 

1. Like most organizations and groups that advocate for communities with low revenue tax bases that are Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other communities of color in both urban and rural areas often go unheard and undervalued.
2. These under-resourced communities often don't have prominent, well-funded lobbyists that can advocate on their behalf during the legislative session. I'm old enough to remember that this was the reason for the start of our joint commissions that have evolved over the years.

As one of the newer commissioners to OCBA, I'm amazed at the amount of effort, time, and engagement Director Lee and his staff can accomplish with short turnaround times for all of the commissions and stay abreast of upcoming events, meetings, and collaborations between groups. OACO is a small but mighty workgroup!

We need to be more generous with the OACO staff with our competing needs and queries to meet legislative deadlines. Funding to support administrative operations would go a long way to gather needed research and to do a needs assessment to extend the voices and engage our constituencies in the legislative process. I fully support HB 5001, but I would love to see the limited-duration positions made permanent and for more full-time employees to be added permanently.

Our Black, brown, Indigenous, and other communities of color across the state deserve so much more, but we should at least be able to afford them that.


Thank you for your consideration,



Liz Foucher-Branch



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