

Chair Grayber, vice-chairs Lewis and Tran, for the record my name is Janelle Bynum, and I am the State Representative for House District 39.

I am testifying today in support of House Bill 2650 because I believe civic engagement is a fundamental cornerstone of the democratic process. Unfortunately, many of our citizens lack access to assist in crafting legislation, even when policy will directly impact them or their community. When I chair a committee, I do all I can to encourage public comment, however, I am cognizant that many citizens do not have the privilege to take time off during the workday to testify. Furthermore, public hearings provide citizens a platform to provide input only *after* legislation is developed, limiting the public's ability to provide input as bills are drafted.

The most effective channel that underrepresented communities have in crafting policy is through volunteer workgroups and task forces. House Bill 2650 supports these efforts by providing workgroups comprised of community-based organizations and impacted persons representing historically underrepresented communities the ability to apply for funding through the Department of Administrative Services to compensate workgroup members for their service. Providing this financial support allows for greater participation of community stakeholders and organizations who are otherwise left out of the conversation.

From the time I first joined the legislature to now I have seen a significant increase in the number of legislative efforts that strive to bring "equitable" outcomes for all Oregonians. For equity to become a reality, rather than a loosely defined goal that is more aspiration than material, policy workgroups must incorporate perspectives that for far too long have been excluded from the traditional legislative and policy making process.

As a small business owner, I am especially optimistic about the prospect of underserved populations finally a proper seat at the table to provide input on policy relating to economic development. I believe the modest financial support this bill provides will allow for greater participation of entrepreneurs of color and organizations supporting minority owned businesses. Successful legislative outcomes require experienced-based input, and creating support systems for community-based organizations to join policy workgroups will yield more equitable results and better incorporate perspectives that for far too long have been shut out.

Colleagues, for these reasons I urge you to support House Bill 2650.