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On Behalf Of: REPAIR

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

Measure: SB776

The dictionary defines reparations as “the making of amends for a wrong one has done, by paying money to or otherwise helping those who have been wronged.”

It is disheartening to see so many opposing this bill trying to quibble over whether or not Oregon had a history of slavery. Reparations isn't just about slavery, it is about acknowledging and making right the wrongs that were inflicted upon our Black community members.

I do not pretend to know what it is like to be discriminated against, physically harmed, stolen from, imprisoned, and killed based on the color of my skin, but I feel a burning rage inside me when I think of the atrocities brought upon my fellow humans under systemic racism. I cannot hear about children's homes being stolen from their parents and then demolished (Legacy Emmanuel Hospital project) with ZERO compensation without thinking about my own children and my own home and the long-term effects this would have on my family for generations.

History shows us that Oregon's racist practices were only thwarted by government intervention, and even then we are slow to take action (Oregon didn't ratify the Fourteenth Amendment—the Equal Protection Clause—until 1973). The state had Black exclusion laws that made it clear this was not a state where Black folks could live comfortably, without harassment or worse.

I grew up in a small town in Oregon where I had little exposure to people of other races and backgrounds. It is surprising how much that is still the case after living in Oregon's largest city of Portland for the past 25 years. Oregon's white majority are often blind to the racism faced by our Black community members. Practices that were put in place long ago are still having negative effects today, and it is long overdue to address this.

I am strongly in support of this bill that addresses Oregon's historical and ongoing racist practices that have hurt our Black community. It is time we make amends for the wrong our state has done by paying money or otherwise helping those who have been wronged.