



March 1, 2023

TO: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare  
FROM: Our Children Oregon, The Children's Agenda  
RE: Support for HB 2918 and 2925, Racism is a Public Health Crisis

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin, Vice-Chair Nelson, and Members of the Committee

The Children's Agenda, convened by Our Children Oregon, brings together ~127 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2023 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families.

**Addressing Racism as a Public Health Crisis is a top priority of the 2023 Children's Agenda.** Progress was made when the Oregon Legislature passed HB 4052 in 2022, but without the necessary funds, this bill cannot be fully implemented. We fully support HB 2918 and 2925 to take action to fully identify investments and strategies to meaningfully address health inequities among Oregon's Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and sovereign Tribal Nations, thus helping to serve the ~289,800 children of color living in Oregon.<sup>1</sup>

For children and families of color in our state, health disparities have been long-existent and largely tied to downstream impacts of systemic and institutional racism. For instance, 39% of Black children in Oregon were not up-to-date on their childhood immunizations in 2019, at a rate more than 10% higher than white children.<sup>2</sup> Black and Native American pregnant mothers in Oregon receive prenatal care at nearly 20% lower rate than white mothers. As well, Black children (11.3%) were nearly twice as likely to be born at low birth weights compared to their white peers (6%).<sup>3</sup>

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Oregonians are less likely to have access to quality healthcare due to economic, geographical, and linguistic barriers that still exist to this day due to institutionalized racist systems, making chronic diseases more prevalent in communities of color. When certain segments of our child population are left with fewer opportunities to maintain and improve their health outcomes, Oregon communities as a whole suffer.

To heal past and present injustices inflicted on these communities, Oregon needs to address the damaging impact of systemic racial barriers through strong and intentional actions. We support HB 2918 and HB 2925 to fulfill the funding and timeline needed to accomplish the requirements

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<sup>1</sup> <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregon-kids-count/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/2022-kids-count-national-report-and-oregon-state-data-cards-release/>

of HB 4052, as originally intended.

- HB 2918 funds \$4 million that is necessary to continue the mobile health pilot program, providing culturally and linguistically responsive health care to improve outcomes of Oregonians impacted by racism.
- HB 2925 extends the timeline (from June 2023 to June 2026) for affinity group task forces to make policy recommendations that improve health outcomes of communities of color across the state.
- Additionally, HB 2925 extends the timeline for OHA to develop recommendations on how to fund intervention programs designed to prevent or intervene in the health conditions that result in inequitable and negative outcomes.

Funding key strategies to address racism as a public health crisis will provide Oregon's children of color, their families and communities, the preventative care they deserve, ensuring an equitable state where every child thrives. We thank you for your time and efforts to improve child well-being across the state. We urge you to support HB 2918 and HB 2925.

Sincerely,

Our Children Oregon  
Oregon Public Health Association  
American Heart Association  
Beyond Toxics  
Catholic Community Services  
Children's Institute  
Clackamas Women's Services  
Community Action Team, Inc.  
FACT Oregon  
Family Forward Oregon  
Friends of Outdoor School  
Everytown for Gun Safety  
IRCO  
NAMI Oregon  
Neighborhood Partnership  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Oregon Alliance of YMCAs  
Oregon AG's Sexual Assault Task Force

Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries  
Oregon CASA Network  
Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials  
Oregon Education Association  
Oregon Environmental Council  
Oregon Food Bank  
Oregon Hunger Task Force  
Oregon Kids Read  
Oregon Nurse Association  
Oregon Primary Care Association  
Oregon Resource Family Alliance  
Oregon School-Based Health Alliance  
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon  
Prevent Child Abuse Oregon  
Pro-Choice Oregon  
Reach Out and Read Northwest  
SEIU 503  
Washington County Kids

*[View the 2023 Children's Agenda: www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2023-childrens-agenda/](http://www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2023-childrens-agenda/)*