

To: House Committee on Judiciary

From: Emily Zou

RE: Support for HB 3294

Chair Janelle Bynum, Vice-Chairs Tom Andersen and Kim Wallan, and members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Emily, and I am a high school student from Lake Oswego, Oregon. My parents moved here from China as young adults to create a better future for my brother and me. For similar reasons, they moved to Lake Oswego for its excellent schools. However, they did not expect the extreme lack of diversity and inclusion in our town. As a Chinese American, I have faced numerous stereotypes, microaggressions, and counts of discrimination at school and around town. Most notable of these incidents was when I learned of Lake Oswego's racist history. Shortly after I moved to Lake Oswego in middle school, I learned of the racist covenants preventing people of color, explicitly Chinese and Japanese individuals, from purchasing property in Lake Oswego. These racist, exclusionary covenants have created a decades-long system that continuously harms people of color. Because of these covenants, Lake Oswego has an extreme lack of diversity, creating a hostile environment for people of color who often feel misunderstood and excluded from the close-knit town.

However, this trend exists beyond just Lake Oswego. Oregon has an extreme history of exclusion toward people of color: the Black Exclusion Act of 1844, and Cockstock Affair, Taylor v. Cohn, and countless acts of discrimination against Chinese, Native, and Black Americans specifically. Oregon was founded to be a white utopia, free of people of color. Today, Portland is

the whitest major city in the United States, and Oregon has extremely low diversity. This detrimentally harms the minorities who do live in Oregon, such as myself.

The legislature must pass HB 3294 to ameliorate centuries of racism in Oregon that have had long-lasting impacts on its minority citizens. HB 3294 will prevent this cycle from continuing for centuries while maintaining the historical context of these covenants through archival texts. When I grow up, I do not want to purchase property that forbids people like me from purchasing it, regardless of the rule's enforcement. The existence of the racist clauses is a painful reminder of Oregon's racist past and its current unwillingness to change the course of the future.

I urge you to vote yes on HB 3294 for all of the first generation Americans like myself.

Thank you for your consideration,

Emily Zou