



To: House Committee on Economic Development & Small Business

From: Imagine Black

Re: Support for HB 3431

Date: March 23, 2023

Chair Bynum, Vice Chair Morgan, Vice Chair Nguyen, and members of the committee:

My name is Danita Harris. I am the Director of Movement Building for Imagine Black, an Oregon non-profit focused on building political power for Black Oregonians.

For as long as Oregon and the nation have existed, Black Americans have been set aside as inferior and targeted as criminals (to say nothing of the systemic terrorism we have experienced due to white supremacy). We have had justice in all forms stripped away from us and made harder to achieve through intentional policy making, ignorance of the issues, and neglect of all kinds. We are only now having meaningful policy conversations around acknowledging and repairing these historical and ongoing injustices.

In Oregon, we have made significant progress around the recreational and medical uses of marijuana, but we have failed to address the historical criminalization of Black and brown Oregonians who used marijuana for medical or recreational purposes and the associated economic oppression caused by the economic impacts of incarceration, supervision, and other costs associated with being held criminally responsible during the so-called “War on Drugs.” As we know, the impacts are far worse for those who experience additional intersections of marginalization.

We are left with a very real gorge where the majority of the Oregon cannabis industry, which is generating millions in profits annually, is now owned and operated by white-bodied people, and Black Oregonians, whose historical over-policing has deprived them of access to capital that could allow them to participate in the cannabis industry more fully. The profits being experienced by this largely white industry would not be possible today if not for the Black activists who helped to bring the legalization of cannabis to the fore who are now almost completely shut out of the industry.

Simply put, the State of Oregon is collecting hundreds of millions of dollars in cannabis-related tax revenues and it is fair and appropriate to ensure that equity of Black Oregonians is centered in this discussion and in the policy outcomes we seek.



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I urge you to vote YES on House Bill 3431 and will close by lifting up the poignant closing words of Chair Janelle Bynum's written testimony on this bill:

Economic justice is social justice, and just like any other form of justice, it cannot wait. It cannot be told to “slow down,” to “take one step at a time, to “be patient.” This is the fourth consecutive session in which legislation such as this has been introduced, and has been a top priority of the BIPOC caucus for the past several years. I would be remiss to not mention that this legislation takes a wide approach to solving our state's growing wealth gap by directly seeking to support our state's rural communities whose economic security has for far too long been ignored.

The mission of providing self-determination and economic self-reliance for our most vulnerable communities simply can no longer be deferred and we must secure ongoing funding for the Economic Equity Investment Program.

In hope,

Danita Harris

Deputy Director of Movement Building, Imagine Black