



Date: February 8, 2024  
To: House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business  
From: Jennifer Parrish Taylor, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for the Urban League of Portland  
Re: Support for HB 4041

Chair Bynum and the Honorable Members of the House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business:

My name is Miles Larson, and I am a Policy Analyst with the Urban League of Portland and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 4041. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and SW Washington.

For context, the Urban League of Portland advocated for The Equity Investment Act which created a \$15 million dollar fund which was to be operated by Business Oregon to provide grants to culturally responsive, community-based organizations that support entrepreneurship, workforce development, and paths to home and land ownership. The fund sought to address the urgency of the widening wealth gap and provide opportunities to strengthen Oregon's economic potential while repairing harm and creating community resiliency. Our support was rooted in what the data shows us which is that between the years 2006-2010, nearly 30 percent of all Black families in Oregon lived in poverty (in comparison to 12% of their White counterparts) and that there had been a negative 16.8% change in median household income. Compound this with the economic impacts of inflation and COVID-19 with many of the frontline workers coming from Black, Indigenous, and Latinx (BIL) communities, rising costs of childcare, housing, and food costs, these disparities are only widening.

The Urban League was a recipient of these funds. We were able to give direct grants for Black Owned small businesses in Oregon up to \$10,000 which helped small businesses take their work to the next level and scale up. Additionally, we used these funds for workforce development, and provided paid, on-the-job training so that they can further their professional skills. This has helped folks who are exiting incarceration with job training, as there are employers that are not willing to take a chance on them. But we will and we provided funding to pay them while they trained at the job. At the end of the program, they now have the option to stay at their current job or go on to another job opportunity, but regardless this program supported them with their employment opportunities. In fact, to celebrate these awardees, we are hosting a reception on February 15<sup>th</sup> and we invite you all to join us.

Clearly there is a need for ongoing and sustained funding for The Economic Equity Investment Program (EEIP) as the results are now in, and the EEIP has become a proven model to advance equitable economic development in every corner of our state.

That is why it is so important to me and my community that you support House Bill 4041.

Respectfully,

Miles Larson  
Policy analyst  
Urban League of Portland  
Portland, OR 97227  
Phone: 503.280.2600  
Fax: 503.281.2612