
To: House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business

From: Mohammad Bader, MS, LPC | Director, Department of County Human Services
Peggy Samolinski | Director, Youth and Family Services Division

Date: February 7, 2024

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 4041

Honorable Chair Bynum, Vice-Chair Diehl, Vice-Chair Nguyen, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Multnomah County Department of County Human Services, we are writing in strong support of HB 4041, which appropriates \$30 million to the Equity Economic Investment Program and updates the economic equity risk factors in the legislation to include members, or descendants of members, of a state or federally recognized Indian tribe.

The Equity Economic Investment Program (EEIP) provides pathways to economic opportunity for Oregonians experiencing the greatest risk of economic instability, with a focus on Black, Indigenous and other People of Color. EEIP addresses racial economic inequities that are deep and were longstanding prior to the pandemic. These wealth disparities are the result of decades of discriminatory policies in employment, banking, housing and access to capital - along with policing and incarceration.

Importantly, the program also includes support for immigrants and refugees, including people who are on a path to stability in a new country. Newly arrived refugees often face significant challenges upon arrival, including limited assets, limited English proficiency, little to no credit history, or applicable job skills or experience. These barriers limit their access to support and resources that build their economic stability.

The EEIP operates through grants to culturally-responsive community based organizations to support economic stability, entrepreneurship, workforce development, and paths to home and land ownership for individuals, families, businesses and communities demonstrating economic risk factors. These culturally responsive and specific organizations have trusting relationships with community members and cultural knowledge and experience to ensure the resources are truly responsive to the needs of the recipients and support their self-determination and success.

Since 2022, EEIP has proven an effective model for advancing equitable economic development statewide. Now is the time to sustain the effort by allocating additional resources and refining the program to support additional Oregonians in their path to stability and prosperity.

Every Oregonian should have the opportunity to build an economically secure and prosperous future for themselves and their family. We at Multnomah County support HB 4041 and ask that you take this opportunity to sustain and grow the investment in addressing racial inequities and pointing us toward a more stable and equitable future for everyone.

Thank you,

Mohammad Bader, MS,LPC

Director

Department of County Human Services

Peggy Samolinski

Director

Youth and Family Services Division