



Oregon Commission on Black Affairs

## Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon

Chair Dexter, Vice Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and Members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness:

My name is Ben Duncan, Commissioner with the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs and I offer this testimony with hope for the possibilities and potential of HB2889.

I write this from a unique vantagepoint, as my professional role as a senior facilitator focused on engaging stakeholders from an objective third party position, seeking to help governmental and non-governmental organizations address complex problems allowed me to lead focus groups and listening sessions with stakeholders across the state to collectively imagine what a housing production strategy could look like for the State of Oregon.

This engagement included for profit and non-profit developers, advocates for low income, communities of color and communities with disabilities, service providers, housing advocates, local and regional planners and others who have a staked interest in and expertise around housing production, and the consequences of a system that is creating the types of housing shortages, lack of affordability, and crisis of housing instability and homelessness we see across all our communities. It was clear that while there will inevitably be policy differences that emerge through the legislative process, there is universal agreement that if we do not solve for housing production, we will not address the pervasive and persistent harms we see as a result.

In the introduction to the legislative recommendations report, “Oregon Housing Needs Analysis: *Leading with Production*,” the authors state, “We cannot equitably distribute what is being underproduced. The people who are suffering most acutely from our housing shortage are disproportionately lower income households and communities of color. The lack of housing options perpetuates segregation through economic exclusion. By restricting people’s housing choices, we make Oregon less fair, deprive people of basic human dignity, and limit our collective growth and prosperity. Where housing is built and for whom dramatically impacts who prospers and how our neighborhoods function.”

For Black Oregonians, this is especially pronounced, and connected to a legacy of both legal and social exclusion. From our state’s founding that prohibited Black residents, to redlining that prevented Black residents from living or owning in specific areas, to the economic and land use policies that create exclusion through systemic and institutional barriers, Black Oregonians have had a lack of access and lack of choice for generations.

**Oregon Commission on  
Black Affairs**

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HB2889 offers possibility. An opportunity to do better for all Oregonians by increasing housing production and increasing housing choice. The benefits are clear, and the implications are massive.

At this point, nor I or the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs is formally endorsing the legislation, but rather offering hope that as it winds its way through the legislative process, as discussions of equity indicators and accountability measures are imagined, that you, as legislators don't lose sight of how powerful the potential is to offer a new vision forward. To realize what we can do to ensure that every Oregonian has the opportunity to live, learn, work, and play in safe and healthy communities with access to housing that is affordable and doesn't continue the longstanding harm of racial and economic segregation that prevents our state, and our people, from reaching our full potential.

With gratitude, with optimism, and with grace,



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1. [OHNA Legislative report, page 5](#)



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