



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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Oregon House Votes to Expand Equitable Access to Housing and Homeownership for Communities of Color

SB 79 will help reduce racial disparities in homeownership by authorizing the Housing and Community Services Department to provide grants and technical assistance to organizations increasing homeownership access to persons of color.

SALEM, OR—Today the House passed [SB 79 A](#), which expands uses of the Home Ownership Assistance Account to include funding grants and technical assistance for organizations working to increase access to homeownership for low-income individuals and people of color. Housing affordability, accessibility and homeownership are central to the BIPOC Caucus’ priorities for this Session.

“Homeownership helps create generational wealth,” said [Rep. Mark Meek](#) (D-Clackamas County), who carried the bill. “We know Black families face racist and discriminatory barriers to affordable housing. We must directly address these inequities. With this legislation we’re reversing course and ensuring communities of color have the tools and resources needed to build and sustain generational wealth.”

According to the Joint Interim Task Force on Addressing Racial Disparities in Homeownership, as of 2019 only 35% of Black people own their homes, contrasting with over 65% of white people in Oregon. The pandemic has continued to expose and exacerbate these disparities, as low-income persons and communities of color encounter increased housing instability.

“These disparities are the result of historical and discriminatory housing policies and practices, disparate access to credit, generational poverty and racial bias that is built into the system, which disproportionately impact Oregon’s communities of color,” said [Sen. James I. Manning, Jr.](#) (D-Eugene), who served on the [Task Force on Addressing Racial Disparities in](#)

[Homeownership](#) with Rep. Meek. “This program takes this problem head on and is one of the puzzle pieces we need to pass in order to advance equity in homeownership.”

The bill directs the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) to prioritize organizations that offer culturally specific counseling, provide down payment assistance, and maintain partnerships with financial institutions, among other considerations. The legislation also clarifies that grants should be used to fund programs for households with incomes at or below area median income and authorizes OHCS to define “persons of color” by rule.

The bill, originally proposed at the request of Governor Kate Brown, passed unanimously and now heads to the Governor’s desk.

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