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REP. TERESA ALONSO LEON
REP. JANELLE BYNUM
REP. DIEGO HERNANDEZ
REP. AKASHA LAWRENCE SPENCE
REP. MARK MEEK
REP. ANDREA SALINAS
REP. TAWNA SANCHEZ
SEN. LEW FREDERICK
SEN. JAMES MANNING

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For More Information, Contact:
Aaron Fiedler: 503-986-1904
aaron.fiedler@oregonlegislature.gov

Civil Rights and Economic Justice Bills Poised to Fail Because of Republican Walkout

SALEM, Ore. - House and Senate Democratic People of Color (POC) Caucus members released a list of over 40 civil rights and economic justice priority bills that are at risk due to Oregon Republicans' refusal to show up for work.

“These bills have had broad, bipartisan support and represent countless hours of work that will have direct and immediate impact on Oregonians across the state,” said Rep. Janelle Bynum (D-East Portland/Happy Valley).

Included in the list are bills to address the lives of Indian children, police accountability, access to health care, wealth generation, discrimination in public places, and stable housing.

Members of the POC Caucus issued the following statements on the status of legislation:

“Republicans are also elected to serve the best interests of ALL Oregonians,” said Sen. Lew Frederick (D-Portland). “Being in the political minority does not mean the rights and needs of marginalized groups should get thrown by the wayside. Now more than ever we need community organizations and voters who are being impacted by these pieces of legislation to speak up.”

“It is unacceptable that Senate and House Republicans can shut down our government and stop progress on bills that would address making health care more affordable,” said Rep. Tawna Sanchez (D-NE Portland). “One of my priority bills, HB 4148, will embed the Indian Child Welfare Act into Oregon statute assuring that Indian children will be provided with the active

efforts required by the law. This bill is an effort to affect the overwhelmingly disproportionate numbers of Indian children in the child welfare system. This bill like many others cannot move forward until Republicans return.”

“Everyone’s word is their bond. This is especially true of every elected Legislative official. Individually we voluntarily took an oath of office to support and defend the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of Oregon. At the start of the session, I was optimistic that our Republican colleagues would do the right thing and honor their oaths of office to the people of Oregon. Sadly, they have walked out again denying a quorum thereby shutting down our government. Oregon deserves better,” said Sen. James Manning (D-Eugene).

“We have a chance in the current budget to make significant investments in our state including funding for our state agencies such as ODOT and DMV as they continue to modernize their systems to better serve Oregonians, flood aid and attempts to reduce our State’s growing houseless populations,” said Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon (D-Woodburn). “HB 4160, the Student Voice Bill, a bill I worked tirelessly with over 50 partners throughout the interim, is now at risk of not passing due to the Republican shut down. I ask my colleagues to think of our students, our marginalized communities, those who have been hit by natural disasters, and our state employees when they make the decision of not showing up for work.”

“We are committed to preventing unnecessary barriers and disproportionate outcomes for those who are underserved and marginalized, our most vulnerable Oregonians are bearing the weight of this walkout, enough is enough,” said Rep. Akasha Lawrence Spence (D-Portland).

“There are a lot of important health care bills that won’t only bring relief to communities of color but will also positively impact all Oregonians,” Rep. Andrea Salinas (D-Lake Oswego) said. “Diabetic patients across the state could use the state’s help to afford their insulin. The help they need isn’t obtainable in the status quo because the Republicans aren’t here to help us support them.”

“It is vital to pass HB 4097 and HB 4098 to better support marginalized communities,” Rep. Diego Hernandez (D-Portland) said. “HB4 097 would protect transit users’ civil liberties and create a safer and just transit system for communities of color, the homeless and other marginalized communities. HB 4098 would develop a plan to expand access to computer science classes in public schools, especially for low-income students and students of color.”

The POC Caucuses warn of dire ramifications for their communities if these bills are not passed. They urge their Republican colleagues to return to the Capitol to continue working together on these vital pieces of legislation. To see a list of the POC Caucus’ 2020 Short Session Priority Legislation, [click here](#). See the full list of at-risk [civil rights and economic justice legislation here](#).

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