



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

For Immediate Release
June 28, 2021

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Legislative BIPOC Caucus Announces 2021 Session Accomplishments, Looks Toward Future

The Caucus highlights session accomplishments, setting the tone for years to come.

SALEM, OR—In a historic moment, the Oregon Legislature’s first Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Caucus announced their 2021 Session accomplishments and future priorities. The 12-member Caucus presented an ambitious policy agenda to address the roots of structural racism and promote racial equity, accountability, justice and healing.

This Session the Caucus prioritized and delivered on affordable housing and the houselessness crisis, public safety and police reform and accountability, environmental justice, education equity, immigrant and refugee rights, economic opportunity and development, childcare infrastructure, healthcare access and affordability, mental and behavioral health, and cultural preservation and celebration.

The legislation passed this Session, developed through a racial equity lens, will support and lift up all Oregonians, especially low-income and working families and communities across the state.

“This Session is historic and sets the tone for what’s to come. We presented a bold policy agenda that will start to put power back into the hands of local communities to give people agency over the decisions impacting them most,” said [Sen. Lew Frederick](#) (D-Portland). “This is a fight for justice for our communities who have been exploited and deprived of resources and opportunities for hundreds of years, yes, but let’s be clear: this isn’t a zero sum game. When we approach policy through a racial equity lens, everyone benefits: Low-income, rural and urban working families and communities.”

“Throughout the session, we have fought tirelessly to bring change for mental health awareness, police accountability and reform, ending discriminatory practices for all Oregonians, and

sustaining economic growth for the small business sector. And we are only getting started,” said [Rep. Janelle Bynum](#) (D-East Portland/Happy Valley). “Today communities and youth activists are once again rising to the occasion, speaking out, taking up space and presenting an ambitious list of policy-asks. Just like past generations have stood up for us, we are here to stand up for the children of today, our future generations.”

2021 Session Legislative Accomplishments

The following bills are a handful of the bills that have been introduced, sponsored, and/or supported by the BIPOC Caucus. For a full list of bills passed this Session, [click here](#).

Public Safety / Police Reform and Accountability

A series of bills were introduced this Session to hold police and law enforcement accountable to the communities they serve, build trust, give communities more agency, and prioritize public safety above all.

“These are huge steps towards people feeling safe and supported in their communities and when they encounter true peace officers, but they are only the first steps. It will take years to create a culture that overcomes past acts of prejudice and disrespect,” said [Sen. Lew Frederick](#) (D-Portland).

A sample of bills from this session include:

- [HB 3355](#): Creates transparency by specifying what identification must be on a law enforcement officer’s uniform and gear during crowd management situations, such as protests.
- [HB 2929](#): Strengthens police misconduct reporting requirements.
- [HB 2936](#): Affirms anti-racist values for law enforcement, adding social media policies and standardizing background checks.
- [HB 3047](#): Anti-doxing legislation that creates cause to sue for damages if a person’s information is released without their consent
- [HB 3059](#): Keeps police from abusing powers by providing more clarity in how to manage “unlawful assemblies.”
- [HB 3265](#): Updates the Sanctuary Promise Act to protect immigrant and refugee communities and prioritize public safety, keeping local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities separate.

Economic Opportunity & Housing

Securing and owning a house is key to generating generational wealth, but through policies like redlining and urban planning, BIPOC communities have many times been denied the tools and resources to purchase a home. The Caucus prioritized legislation to spur economic growth by making housing more affordable and accessible, as well as increasing access to secure and stable housing and shelter for people experiencing homelessness.

Furthermore, legislation like the CROWN Act, which would ban public schools and employers from discriminating against hairstyles associated with race, looks to create and foster equitable working and public spaces.

“Admittedly, working in the midst of a global pandemic has been difficult. Especially seeing the loss of loved ones, jobs, and the displacement of so many families. The COVID-19 pandemic presented us with some unique challenges in 2020 and 2021 and this is where we were forced to acknowledge which parts of our system are strong and which are weak,” said [Rep. Janelle Bynum](#) (D-East Portland/Happy Valley). “Fortunately for Oregon, we are poised to make a strong comeback and this is what the session was all about. I wanted to see a focus on inclusion, good governance, and historic investments in mental health. And we got that.”

“The pandemic illustrated more clearly than ever that ensuring Oregonians have access to stable and secure housing is not only a moral right but also a public health benefit. These bills are just a few of many passed this session to protect our most vulnerable community members from houselessness and housing instability,” said [Rep. Wlmsvey Campos](#) (D-Aloha).

“This session we have made significant improvements in housing access for BIPOC communities. This caucus championed bills that will protect renters and homeowners who have been impacted by COVID-19, as well as bills that will start to dismantle the systemic barriers to homeownership faced by BIPOC Oregonians. I’m proud of the incredible work we did this session, and look forward to continuing the work in future sessions,” said [Rep. Mark Meek](#) (D-Gladstone)

A sample of bills from this session include:

- [HB 2935](#): The CROWN Act - Bans public schools and employers from discriminating against hairstyles associated with race or sexual orientation.
- [HB 2518](#): Brownfields Redevelopment - Establishes forgivable loan program to revitalize Brownfields properties.
- [HB 2551](#) (Funded through [HB 2433](#)): Invests in Individual Development Accounts (IDA) and sunset extension.
- [HB 2550](#): Keeps home sellers from discriminating based on race.
- [SJM 4](#): Urges Congress to enact legislation to begin the process of implementing reparations for Black Americans based on slavery and discrimination.
- [SB 282](#): Extends grace period for repayment, protecting tenants impacted by COVID.
- [SB 79](#): Addresses racial disparities in homeownership, providing grants and technical assistance to organizations increasing homeownership access to persons of color.
- [SB 850](#): Collects data on unhoused peoples.

- [HB 3335](#): Promotes safe, stable and affordable homes, creating a pilot program to construct accessory dwelling units.
- [HB 2007](#): Requires implicit bias training for mortgage loan originators.
- [SB 278](#): Requires landlords and courts to delay termination of residential tenancies for nonpayment for 60 days if the tenant provides documentation of application for rental assistance.

Environmental Justice

Climate change and environmental justice issues [disproportionately impact](#) BIPOC and low-income communities, who due to policies like red lining and disinvestment, are more exposed to pollution, chemical toxins and waste, landfills, and sewage plants. Legislation this Session focused on creating renewable energy jobs, providing green home repairs, greater energy efficiency and lowering utility costs for BIPOC, low-income, and rural communities.

“It’s never been more urgent to take action as we face unprecedented drought and water shortages, extreme heat, and wildfire season. I am hopeful that we can harness this moment to create jobs and investments so our communities can benefit from a clean energy future,” said [Rep. Khanh Pham](#) (D-Portland).

A sample of bills from this session include:

- [HB 2475](#): Energy Affordability Act - Allows the Public Utility Commission to create a discount rate class for low-income households
- [HB 2842](#): Healthy Homes - Invests \$10 Million to engage low-income Oregonians to improve energy efficiency, safety and drive down costs.
- [HB 2021](#): 100% Clean Energy - Invests \$50 million in local jobs and clean energy for rural, coastal, low-income and BIPOC communities. This is the strongest electricity emissions reduction timeline in the country, setting the goal of 100% clean energy by 2040.

Education Equity

In approaching education equity, legislation focused on building a system where BIPOC students could succeed through culturally-specific services and support, as well as diversification of the pipeline for teachers.

“As the first Indigenous Latina Chair of the House Education Committee, it is important to me that we advance priorities to build an equitable education system that ensures all students are able to develop the knowledge and skills to be engaged and involved in their communities, in and outside of the classroom. Our goal is to make sure children have an equitable start at school in order to achieve better economic and social outcomes for individuals, families, and communities for our state,” said [Rep. Alonso Leon](#) (D-Woodburn).

A sample of bills from this session include:

- [HB 2589](#): Ensures GED students receive the same placement exams and exemptions as their college ready peers.
- [HB 2817](#): Allows GED students to participate in interscholastic activities.
- [HB 2590](#): Gives students a voice; establishes Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education that includes BIPOC, rural, low-income, and other underrepresented students.
- [HB 2166](#): Prioritizes connecting students and parents with social workers and mental health resources, rather than disciplinary actions that disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) youth due to structural racism and a lack of culturally-appropriate and specific care.
- [HB 2056](#): Promotes multilingual education to support students of different backgrounds.
- [HB 2681](#): Prohibits the display of hate symbols on school property.
- [SB 5514](#): Funds a record \$9.3 billion in state school funding.

Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Protecting and amplifying immigrant and refugee voices and experiences was a key component of this Session’s successes. Bills passed will ensure immigrant and refugee communities have access to adequate working benefits, healthcare, housing, and support. Also passed, the Sanctuary Promise Act prioritizes community safety, human rights, and dignity.

“There have been many great bills that have passed this session to advance the immigrant and refugee communities, our safety and economic and social security,” said [Sen. Kayse Jama](#) (D-Portland). “It is important and necessary for us to celebrate these legislations while acknowledging that we have more work to get done.”

A sample of bills from this Session include:

- [HB 3265](#): Updates the Sanctuary Promise Act to protect immigrant and refugee communities and prioritize public safety, keeping local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities separate.
- [SB 778](#): Creates the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement that will advocate for and partner with statewide immigrant and refugee organizations to coordinate strategies, convene stakeholders, and provide policy support for communities across the state. This will ensure immigrant and refugee needs are reflected in the policy proposed.
- [SB 718](#): Appropriates moneys from the General Fund to the Department of Human Services to award grants to refugee resettlement agencies to provide specified services to refugees.
- [HB 2359](#): Ensures health care providers have adequate and accessible translation and interpretation services for limited-English Proficiency (LEP) patients and patients with hearing loss.

- [HB 2819](#) (Funded through [HB 2433](#)): Expands eligibility for Earned Income Tax Credit, a key anti-poverty tool, to individuals with individual taxpayer identification numbers in lieu of Social Security number.

Childcare & Infrastructure

A major priority this Session was affordable, accessible and culturally-specific child care for working and low-income families, BIPOC mothers and caregivers, as well as adequate compensation for providers. BIPOC mothers and caregivers have borne the brunt of job losses during COVID, typically take on more of the child care work at home, and are the backbone of the early child care workforce, [but are significantly underpaid](#). The child care bill, HB 3073, is a major investment and restructuring of how we approach child care in the state and will address inequities in the workforce. This is essential infrastructure to an equitable recovery.

“Childcare is an essential investment in our workers and in our children and if we are serious about equitable recovery, we will begin to see it as necessary infrastructure, too. We can start to build toward a universal, culturally responsive, quality and affordable childcare system and we can do that by starting with our childcare bill, HB 3073,” said [Rep. Andrea Valderrama](#) (D-Portland).

A sample of bills from this session include:

- [HB 3073](#): Makes child care more affordable and accessible for low-income and working families; ensures providers are adequately compensated for their work.
- [HB 2505](#): Establishes Child Welfare Equity Advisory Committee to address inequities, provide oversight, and prevent bias for the wellbeing and safety of children.
- [HB 3182](#): Ensures care for native children is culturally appropriate, incorporating certain provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act into Oregon laws.
- Broadband Internet (ARPA Investments)

Preserving and Celebrating Culture & History

Hundreds of years of exploitation and racist assimilation policies have attempted to erase the cultures and histories of communities of color. Legislation that preserves and celebrates the state and country’s diverse and rich culture was a key priority this year. Bills like HB 2526, that establish Indigenous People’s Day, will help to recognize and memorialize the many histories, cultures, contributions and lives.

"Passing policies like this is a step in the right direction. Legislation that honors and embraces diversity is a start to an important conversation and movement correcting racist policies that were meant to divide and erase our culture. We must continue to empower our BIPOC communities and leaders and work to remove the systemic racism that plagues our institutions,” said [Rep. Ricki Ruiz](#) (D-Gresham).

A sample of bills from this session include:

- [HB 2526](#): Honors and recognizes the native people of the state, including the Oregon Tribes, addressing the U.S.'s revisionist colonial history and replacing Columbus Day.
- [HB 2052](#): Allows Native American students to wear tribal regalia and items of cultural significance at public schools, including high school graduation.
- [HB 2914](#): Establishes April as Arab American Heritage Month to celebrate and honor the contributions of Arab Americans and Oregonians.

Healthcare Access

Accessible, affordable, and preventative healthcare saves lives. Disparities in public health disproportionately impact BIPOC communities, making racism a public health crisis. This Session healthcare has been expanded to ensure Oregonians, no matter their immigration status, have the care they need.

“I am proud of the investments and legislation we passed this session to address racial disparities in healthcare costs, access, and quality,” said [Rep. Andrea Salinas](#) (D-Lake Oswego). “What this legislative body and Caucus have shown is that systemic inequities are a policy choice that we have the power to influence and change--we chose change. We put people and their livelihoods first.”

A sample of bills from this session include:

- [HB 3352](#): Cover All People - Expands healthcare coverage, affordability and accessibility to Oregonians, including DACA recipients.
- [HB 3159](#) Requires care organizations or health care providers to collect demographic data to help track disparities and inequities based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation.
- [HB 3294](#): Menstrual Dignity Act - Makes tampons and sanitary pads free at public schools, including colleges and universities, for students who menstruate.
- [SB 70](#): Establishes Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) to ensure community-based support for BIPOC and low-income communities and increase equity in healthcare.
- [SB 428](#): Extends timeline for the Universal Health Care Task Force to submit recommendations on equitable, affordable and accessible care to the Legislature.
- [HB 2359](#): Ensures health care providers have adequate and accessible translation and interpretation services for limited-English Proficiency (LEP) patients and patients with hearing loss.
- [HB 2362](#): Equal Care Act - Makes healthcare more affordable and protects healthcare services; puts patients and communities first by requiring an oversight committee for some healthcare system and hospital consolidations.

Mental and Behavioral Health

Following a traumatic year, fueled by COVID-19, an economic and housing crisis, Oregon families and communities need accessible, affordable and comprehensive care. This Session, legislation was passed to provide Oregonians with a statewide system of behavioral health crisis care that offers a response that is rapid, effective, consistent and linguistically and culturally appropriate to save lives.

“If the pandemic has done any good at all, it has placed a bright spot light on our lack of investment into our Behavioral Health system and while that light is harsh, it was necessary for us to see what needed to be done,” said [Rep. Tawna Sanchez](#) (D-Portland). “The Behavioral Health package has the potential to add significant investment into systems and services that will support the health and wellbeing of Oregonians as we begin to recover from the pandemic. The package also puts us in a place to build on existing structures in a way that we have not been able to do in the past.”

A sample of bills from this session include:

- [HB 2417](#): Expands crisis stabilization services, including a 9-8-8 crisis hotline and mobile crisis services and centers.
- [HB 2949](#): Diversifies the mental health care pipeline and provides financial assistance for undergraduates and graduate students.
- [HB 2086](#): Provides community-driven programs with a focus on culturally-specific and responsive behavioral health services to people of color, tribal communities and people of lived experience.

Over the course of the interim and into the next Session, the Caucus will continue to push for an intersectional policy framework that prioritizes community agency and lifts up BIPOC experiences, stories, and voices. The Caucus stays determined to pass legislation like HB 2002, overtime pay for farmworkers and Universal Representation.

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About the BIPOC Caucus

Together we form Oregon’s first Legislative Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Caucus. We are not a monolith, but bonded through our unique and similarly lived-experiences. The work does not end this Session, nor the next. Our work is defined by the impact we have on generations to come. Alongside community leaders and organizations, we are creating a policy framework that will give communities agency, address the roots of structural racism, and promote racial equity, accountability, justice, and healing.

The 12-member BIPOC Caucus was established in advance of the 2021 Session to address racial justice issues that include bold asks for policy and funding to invest in our communities,

including hard assets that are culturally specific. At the beginning of the Session, the Caucus put forth priorities developed through a community-driven process to deliver for Oregon BIPOC.

Caucus Members

Senators: Lew Frederick, Kayse Jama, James Manning

Representatives: Teresa Alonso Leon, Janelle Bynum, Wlnsvey Campos, Andrea Valderrama, Mark Meek, Khanh Pham, Ricki Ruiz, Andrea Salinas, Tawna Sanchez

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