

Dear Multnomah County Chair and Commissioners:

We are pleased to present *the African-American Community in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile*. This report is part of a broader effort led by the Coalition of Communities of Color to utilize data to better understand the needs of Oregon's culturally diverse communities. As you are aware, African-Americans and other communities of color in Oregon experience grave disparities and inequitable levels of treatment across a wide range of determinants – education, economic development, health, housing and employment. In particular, the African-American community has faced continued upheaval and devastation since our migration here due to the ongoing discriminatory systems of development and decision making by city government and other mainstream jurisdictions. Over the last 60 years, three vibrant Black business districts and four communities have been scattered, including the most recent gentrification and displacement of African-Americans living in North and Northeast Portland.

Yet despite these grave systemic inequities, our community continues to remain resilient, with our population, along with other communities of color, growing at rapid rates. While the white population increased by 30 percent over the last 11 years, the Black population increased by 66 percent. These changing demographics, coupled with the grave disparities currently experienced by our community, call for urgent action by the City of Portland, Multnomah County and other local jurisdictions to implement a plan for addressing our needs.

Existing data that informs decision-making in Multnomah County inadequately captures the lived experiences of communities of color. As such, it is often the case that policies, which on the surface appear racially-neutral, when implemented actually have grave implications for diverse communities. Whether intentional or unintentional, data often serves to obscure and oppress rather than to empower African-Americans and eliminate disparities. As such, we ask that you use the granular race/ethnicity data in this report, and in other data collection mechanisms, as an important means (and not an end) to ensuring that your policy and programmatic decisions best meet the needs of African-Americans and other groups.

While the findings in this report may be surprising or unsettling to readers, they represent the generational experiences of African-American community constituents. Thus, we hope this report does not simply sit on a shelf, but rather fosters action and accountability in local government to develop pro-active policy and programmatic solutions that will eliminate the disparities identified.

We thank the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners for their time today, and their future work to move the report's recommendations ahead.