

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement on Closure of Clackamas County Office of Equity and Inclusion

On Thursday, Clackamas County employees received word that the Office of Equity and Inclusion would be eliminated. This decision represents a significant step backward in our collective journey towards a more fair and just society where everyone feels welcome.

I was one of the nearly 800 community members, businesses, and organizations who signed on to a letter in July urging the board to reconsider this action and provide the necessary capacity to the office that would sustain its important work.

Now is the time to amplify and bolster the efforts of equity and inclusion, especially with rising inequities across housing, workforce, education, and safety net services. Together, we face an upcoming national election and it's crucial to build communities that are welcoming and who celebrate the diversities across our county.

The work of promoting equity and fighting discrimination is not about dividing us; it is about bringing us together by acknowledging and addressing the systemic barriers that have long hindered certain groups in our community.

Believing that such crucial efforts are divisive overlooks the core values of equity and inclusion – values that strengthen communities by fostering understanding, respect, and fair treatment for all. By dismantling an office dedicated to these principles, we risk perpetuating the very divisions and inequalities that the office was established to address.

As a concerned resident and advocate for justice, I believe this decision reflects a grave error in leadership. It sends a disheartening message to our community, especially to those who have historically been marginalized. It undermines the progress we have made and dims our hope for a more equitable future in Clackamas County.

We must not shy away from challenges of equity work but face them head-on with courage, empathy, understanding, and an unwavering commitment to justice for all. The winds will change at the Clackamas Commission and until then, I urge you all to continue to do the hard work of showing up and building stronger, more respectful and inclusive communities.

Relevant Articles:

<https://canbyfirst.com/hundreds-of-businesses-organizations-and-residents-signal-support-of-county-dei/>

https://www.milwaukiereview.com/news/clackamas-county-employee-titles-will-no-longer-say-equity-or-inclusion/article_9a73b784-b178-11ee-bd75-6bdd5073a7d9.html

###

Rebecca Stavenjord, Milwaukie City Council

stavenjordr@milwaukieoregon.gov