



## **OLA Board Response to Recent Discussions on Libs-OR re: EDIA Petition February 28, 2022**

Dear OLA members and members of the Oregon library community,

At our business meeting on February 4, 2022, the 2021-2022 Executive Board of the Oregon Library Association voted to endorse the petition authored by the OLA EDI Antiracism Committee, "[Break the Library Institutional Reliance on Unpaid BIPOC Labor!](#)" The Board continues to endorse this petition and acknowledges that insufficient context was provided when we disseminated it. We apologize for this misstep and share this statement to provide context and our path forward.

Before we do, we must address the heart of the work we're doing. We cannot continue to speak about equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism in the abstract, as theoretical underpinnings, or as part of an acronym, workshop, or resource list. We are losing our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) colleagues because of our collective hesitance to change the status quo that causes them harm every day. When we speak of our BIPOC colleagues, we are speaking of real people for whom we have not assured psychological safety; yet, who have done and continue to do EDIA work on their own time, without compensation, and oftentimes without any recognition. With this as our shared understanding, we must engage in challenging discussions and implement meaningful change — together.

Moving forward, we acknowledge that not everyone on Libs-OR is regularly engaged with OLA and the State Library, and as a result the greater context of the petition was not as clear as it could have been. To address this lack of clarity, we offer the following information about the work of the OLA Executive Board.

We have actively committed to being an equitable, diverse, inclusive, and anti-racist organization through our strategic plan, the full text of which can be found on the OLA website (<https://www.olaweb.org/strategic-plan-2020-23>). We are dedicated to achieving the objectives in order to improve diversity within OLA through recruitment, retention, and take action in support of librarians of color in our association and in the field of librarianship.

OLA is a chapter of the American Library Association (ALA), and as such we also draw on the [ALA Code of Ethics](#) which states: “We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.”

During our consideration of the petition for Board endorsement, the processes for recruitment for State Library positions were explained and understood. Rather than directly endorsing a particular candidate, we believe the language in the petition highlighting the expertise of our incoming OLA President (the first person of color to hold the position) is important to illustrate the qualities desired in a person filling a position and intends to celebrate the fortune of having that experience among our membership. It is also needed to concretely illustrate the problem of continued reliance on unpaid labor among our BIPOC members. In that spirit, we did not consider endorsement of the petition to create a conflict of interest for Board members or the Association.

After consulting [guidance from ALA](#) and discussing the situation with ALA staff, we continue to believe the endorsement of the petition did not create a conflict of interest. OLA does have policy statements related to conflict of interest but the language is dated and is difficult to apply in nuanced situations. We recognize we need to consider potential conflicts carefully and will work towards clarifying policies to better address situations in the future.

In her [message on Tuesday, February 15, 2022](#), Acting State Librarian Nancy Hoover confirmed that the State Library is seriously considering creating an EDIA consultant position after hearing feedback through multiple channels, including the petition. The State Library thanked and acknowledged Marci Ramiro-Jenkins, the OLA EDIA Committee, and other Oregon library staff of color for their work, and agreed that a “statewide paid EDIA consultant would help alleviate some of that extra weight placed on our colleagues of color and hopefully inspire local libraries to focus more attention on EDIA issues.” We celebrate State Library leaders’ recognition of the burden placed on OLA’s BIPOC members doing EDIA work and their positive response to the recommendation to address it.

Despite what has been suggested over the course of this conversation, the OLA Executive Board did not and does not expect tacit agreement with every action we take. This is a large organization with diverse membership, and we attempt to consider and represent our members accordingly. Our strategic goal of inclusion will

not always result in harmony. We do expect engagement in public conversations to be thoughtful and careful not to cause harm, especially to our BIPOC colleagues.

The OLA Executive Board is working to improve transparency and communication within our organization. If you have any questions or concerns about Board actions and decisions, we encourage you to reach out to us directly. All members' names, roles, and email addresses are listed on the OLA website (<https://www.olaweb.org/executive-board>).

Additionally, OLA Executive Board meetings are open and OLA members are welcome and encouraged to attend. We post our agendas, minutes, and virtual meeting information on the OLA website (<https://www.olaweb.org/executive-board-meetings>). This year, the Board has instituted informal "drop-in" meetings to allow OLA members to engage with the OLA President, Association Manager, and other OLA leaders. Our next drop in meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2022 at 10:00 am. We encourage anyone that has questions about Board activities to attend this meeting.

Sincerely,

Oregon Library Association 2021-22 Executive Board

Arlene Weible, OLA President

Marci Ramiro-Jenkins, OLA Vice-President/President-Elect

Kate Lasky, OLA Past President

Stuart Levy, OLA Treasurer

Star Khan, OLA Secretary

Sami Kerzel, OLA Member-At-Large

Kirsten Brodbeck-Kenney, OLA's Representative to ALA Council

Emily Ford, Academic Division/ACRL-Oregon President

Susan Cackler, Children's Services Division Chair

Grace Butler, Oregon Association of School Libraries (OASL) President

Denise Auld, Oregon Young Adult Network Chair

Halsted Bernard, Public Library Division Chair

Eduardo Arizaga, REFORMA Co-Chair

Bobbye Hernandez, REFORMA Co-Chair

Rinny Lakin, Support Staff Division Chair