



CENTER FOR EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY

January 8, 2024

Dear Senator,

I write to express my opposition to placing ACA7 on the November ballot, or any ballot. For the well-known reasons—legally and moral—articulated by many for decades and of which you are surely familiar, I oppose preferential treatment based on race, sex, or ethnicity. However, allow me to address a different issue related to ACA7.

It appears that if the measure goes forward, the public debate will be largely over reparations for black Californians. The measure's primary sponsor, Assemblyman Corey Jackson, has been advocating this side of the issue in a variety of venues. As Assemblyman Jackson has expressed many times, the report of California's task force on reparations calls for Proposition 209's demise. ACA7 is his answer to this call.

A debate focused on reparations is neither in the interest of Californians generally nor of black Californians in particular. As the recent poll by the UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies indicates, Californians oppose cash reparations by more than a 2 to 1 margin. Around 44% of California voters "strongly oppose." Indeed, anything called "reparations" is viewed with disdain by voters.

Recent events in California and in San Francisco in particular have caused too many of my fellow black Americans to put their hopes and dreams into the goal of receiving reparations—an idea that is going nowhere fast. ACA7 would only prolong the period during which needy black Americans think of reparations as the answer to their troubles and will discourage them from putting their energies and talents into pursuits more likely to benefit themselves, their families, and their communities. Moreover, ACA7's focus on reparations will likely increase the alienation many feel along racial lines and exacerbate deep-seated grievances. It is time for all of us to move on—particularly in California where voters made their preference for colorblind equal opportunity for all clear a mere three years ago via Proposition 16.

There are many things that can be done to help the disadvantaged. But allowing state and local governments to decide who is "privileged" and who is not based on race or ethnicity is the wrong approach. The best course of action on ACA7 is to take no action.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you in greater depth, should you have any interest.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a hand-drawn oval. The signature appears to be 'Devon Westhill'.

Devon Westhill
President and General Counsel
Center for Equal Opportunity