



Commissioner Mingus Mapps
City of Portland

To whom it may concern,

I strongly support the grant request of Billy Webb Elks Lodge (BWEL) to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. This grant will enable Billy Webb Elks Lodge to hire an Executive Director to lead the restoration of this essential cultural landmark in Portland, Oregon.

For decades, this establishment has served the African American community in various capacities. During its early years in the 1920s, when it was the Williams Avenue YWCA, this space allowed African American women to gather and organize against Jim Crow segregation in the Pacific Northwest. From 1956 to 1964, the Portland branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) located its offices in the basement of the building, and the Oregon Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, Urban League of Portland, and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) utilized spaces as well. This building has always been a hub for organizing, activism, socialization, and recreation for the African American community.

This site is a critical landmark for the African American community. Preserving and restoring the Billy Webb Elks Lodge and its historical legacy is more important than ever as it is located in the rapidly gentrifying Albina neighborhood. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mingus Mapps