



Chair Williamson and Members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is Roberto Gutierrez and I am the Policy Director for Causa Oregon. Causa is an immigrants rights organization. Causa works to improve the lives of Latino immigrants and their families in Oregon through advocacy, coalition building, leadership development, and civic engagement. Latino immigrants and their families are the heart of Causa and inspire, implement, and champion our work.

Causa is also a founding member of the Fair Shot For All Coalition. The Fair Shot For All Coalition is a unique partnership of over 30 community based organizations and labor unions who came together in 2014 to advance racial, gender, and economic justice by fixing the broken policies that prevent women, people of color, immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ people and working and low income Oregonians from getting a fair shot.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 3145 to provide equal access to legal representation and justice for all Oregonians.

Immigrants living in Oregon are part of our families, communities, workplaces, and places of worship. Yet, we know that immigrants have historically been profiled and pulled over and arrested. When immigrants walk into a courtroom without quality legal representation they sometimes end up making plea bargains without understanding the impacts to their immigration status. As a result they can be unfairly taken off their path to citizenship and put on a pathway to deportation—even if they have no other criminal record and have lived

here for years. This can lead to long or permanent separation from their families and destruction of lives they have worked very hard to build.

Even when arrests don't have impacts on someone's legal status, we know that people of color are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system and are likely to face harsher treatment and penalties without a lawyer that has had the opportunity to fully investigate the case. If current trends continue, [nationally, 1 in 6 latino men can expect to go to jail in their lifetime due to historic and ongoing racism](#). Lack of effective legal assistance exacerbates racial and economic inequalities. Defendants with publicly appointed attorneys are more likely to be detained before trial as well as more likely to be jailed. Arrest and even temporary detainment can mean loss of income, employment, and housing. This is particularly hard for immigrants who often lack access to safety nets and work in jobs without protections.

In this time of mass incarceration and surge of laws nationally targeting immigrants, Oregon can take the lead as a place of fairness and justice for all. This last November, with the defeat of Measure 105, Oregonians sent a clear signal that we want fairness and equitable opportunity for immigrants. It is important that quality legal representation is accessible to immigrants at the beginning of criminal proceedings. This includes public defenders with manageable caseloads, training in cultural competencies, access to experts with appropriate levels of knowledge of applicable immigration laws, and access to support staff including interpreters and social workers for their clients' needs.

We know that these important reforms will produce better outcomes for immigrants and all Oregonians and we thank you for considering a yes vote on this bill.