

*Good morning chairs and members of the community,*

My name is Wendy Roman and I am speaking here in place of Frank Garcia, who is currently in Phoenix, OR distributing community donations to the victims of the September wildfires.

LC 28 is a crucial response to the desolation people are facing in the Rogue Valley. Migrant Latino families, especially, are suffering on multiple fronts. They lost their homes and lost important documentation—Green Cards, employment authorization cards, matriculas and foreign passports, and even the proof of their citizenship.

The Rogue Valley is home to many Latino migrants that settled there in the 1990s. They are the backbone of the workforce in the area, and many of them lived in multigenerational trailer parks that were decimated by the fires.

At Immigration Counseling Services, we have convened our resources to provide some relief to the vulnerable immigrant population currently displaced in Phoenix and Medford. We organized three legal clinics to deliver pro-bono immigration counseling, and with the help of the Oregon Latino Leadership Network, we also brought forth social workers, mental health specialists, and trucks filled with donations. Across these three legal clinics, ICS has provided over 100 pro-bono legal consults.

This effort is made in good faith, but we also know it is not sustainable. Even before the wildfires, the Rogue Valley was experiencing a scarcity of access to legal resources. Immigration firms are concentrated in the Portland area, and this distance creates an additional barrier for folks hoping to access justice. Many migrants in the region are going without legal representation, a fact that is especially alarming in the context of the trauma they are already experiencing.

Passing LC 28 would yield a lifeline to immigrants and their families in the Rogue Valley.

We all have a responsibility to our immigrant communities. We all owe them a debt of gratitude for the contributions they have made financially and culturally to our state and to our cities. Immigrants make Oregon strong, and it is time we stand behind them with unweaving support.

Immigration Counseling Service and our coalition all stand in firm affirmation of LC 28. Gracias.