



March 30, 2021

Senate Committee on Judiciary  
& Ballot Measure 110 Implementation  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Testimony in Support of SB 778 — Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement**

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share support for SB 778 on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). The ACLU of Oregon is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 28,000 members statewide.

My family and I are immigrants from South Korea. My parents came to America because they believed it was a land of opportunity especially for their three children.

In South Korea, my dad — my “appa” in Korean — was a government bureaucrat, and my mom — my “umma” — a health care worker. In America, though, like many immigrants, my parents worked with their hands because they weren’t fluent in English. Our first year, my dad worked as a dishwasher and custodian, and my mom collected soda cans to redeem for supplemental income. After a year, my parents purchased Alameda Cleaners from another immigrant family, and my parents learned to clean clothing for their living and raised their three children as Oregonians.

Today, after working as an attorney and higher education leader, I am the Executive Director of the ACLU of Oregon. My sister is an administrator at Oregon Health & Science University who has worked at teaching and research hospitals at Harvard, UCLA, and Stanford. My brother is the owner of an auto body shop who works with and supports many other small business owners who are immigrants or refugees or their children. My parents retired about ten years ago after a Latinx immigrant family purchased our dry cleaners to continue it as a family business.

- **Immigrants and refugees are a vital part of Oregon’s families and communities.**

Since the nation’s founding, more than 55 million immigrants and refugees from every continent have settled in the United States. With the exception of Indigenous and First Nations people, everyone living in this country is either an immigrant or the descendent of voluntary or involuntary immigrants and refugees.

In Oregon, one in ten Oregonians is an immigrant or refugee, while one in nine residents is a U.S. citizen who was born in the U.S. with at least one immigrant or refugee parent.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 90,000 U.S. citizens in Oregon live with at least one family member who is undocumented, and Oregon is home to almost 10,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.<sup>2</sup> Some estimates project that immigrants and refugees could form nearly a fifth of the population of the Pacific Northwest by 2030.<sup>3</sup>

Immigrants and refugees are a vital part of the workforce in Oregon. One in eight workers in the state is an immigrant or refugee.<sup>4</sup> Immigrants and refugees make up a significant portion of “essential workers”; they represent half of all workers with less than a high school diploma in Oregon and Washington who do frontline jobs in areas such as manufacturing, health care and social assistance, accommodation and food services, the retail trade, agriculture, and construction.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, immigrants and refugees account for nearly a quarter of Oregon’s computer software engineers, as well as large percentages of the computer scientists, postsecondary teachers, surgeons, architects, and engineers in the Pacific Northwest.<sup>6</sup>

Immigrants and refugees, including undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients, also contribute significantly to our communities as taxpayers, consumers, and entrepreneurs who create businesses and jobs.<sup>7</sup>

- **Immigrant and refugee communities face a range of challenges.**

Although immigrant and refugee Oregonians contribute in significant ways to our communities, the immigrant and refugee population in Oregon is not a singular monolith, and many immigrant and refugee communities and individuals — especially Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities — are disproportionately impacted by systemic inequities:

- Immigrants and refugees, especially those who are undocumented, can face exploitative workplace conditions, including exposure to accident and injury, violations of wage and hour laws, and lack of health insurance coverage.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-oregon>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.gcir.org/sites/default/files/resources/GCIR\\_Report\\_on\\_OR\\_%26\\_WA\\_webversion\\_0.pdf](https://www.gcir.org/sites/default/files/resources/GCIR_Report_on_OR_%26_WA_webversion_0.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-oregon>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.gcir.org/sites/default/files/resources/GCIR\\_Report\\_on\\_OR\\_%26\\_WA\\_webversion\\_0.pdf](https://www.gcir.org/sites/default/files/resources/GCIR_Report_on_OR_%26_WA_webversion_0.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-oregon>

<sup>8</sup> <https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.uoregon.edu/dist/a/13513/files/2018/08/immigrationenglish-xvjomi.pdf>; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4306458/>

- Immigrant and refugee communities are impacted by higher rates of income inequality and poverty.<sup>9</sup>
- Immigrants and refugee communities face persistent disparities in health outcomes due to higher rates of being uninsured or underinsured and lack of culturally competent health care.<sup>10</sup>
- Immigrant and refugee children face significant disparities in educational outcomes, with the disparate outcomes increasing into higher level grades and resulting in significantly lower high school graduation rates.<sup>11</sup>
- In the last decade, Latinx immigrants have made up significant percentages of Oregon’s immigrant and refugee community,<sup>12</sup> and Latinx communities have faced systemic challenges in a wide array of areas including in the areas of family separation and criminalization of youth. For example, studies indicate that Latinx children were removed from their homes into short-term foster care at levels 66% higher than would be expected based on population size, and Latinx youth were criminally charged at 97% higher rates and held in detention at 34% higher rates than White youth.<sup>13</sup>
- Being an immigrant, refugee, or non-citizen increases the odds of being the victim of a hate crime.<sup>14</sup> In the past several years, immigrants and refugees from a range of communities — and particularly in the Latinx and Asian Pacific Islander communities — have experienced an increase in hate incidents and violence, with crimes of physical violence trending upwards.<sup>15</sup>

● **A coordinated, data-based approach is needed in Oregon to support immigrant and refugee communities.**

SB 778 would create an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement. With this office, Oregon would have the resources needed to engage in strategic, data-driven, responsive, and creative approaches to assessing and addressing the needs of immigrant and refugee communities, in a manner that is culturally and geographically responsive but also coordinated across Oregon. Some of the important areas of strategic planning and initiatives this office could coordinate and oversee are:

- Building welcoming and supportive communities across Oregon;
- Strengthening existing pathways to naturalization and civic engagement;

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/osp/Docs/Area%20of%20High%20Poverty%20Density.pdf>; <https://multco.us/file/34343/download>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/OEI/Reports/21st-Century-Health-Equity-Investments-Report-OHEA.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/EL-factsheet2018-Oregon\\_Final.pdf](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/EL-factsheet2018-Oregon_Final.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.qcir.org/sites/default/files/resources/GCIR\\_Report\\_on\\_OR\\_%26\\_WA\\_webversion\\_0.pdf](https://www.qcir.org/sites/default/files/resources/GCIR_Report_on_OR_%26_WA_webversion_0.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/article/713234>

<sup>14</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12103-021-09616-x>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/12/us/hate-crimes-fbi-report.html>;

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hatecrimes-report/victims-of-anti-latino-hate-crimes-soar-in-u-s-fbi-report-idUSKBN1XM2OQ>;

<https://publicintegrity.org/politics/rising-hate-drives-latinos-and-immigrants-into-silence/>;

[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.napaba.org/resource/resmgr/8\\_news\\_&\\_media/2021\\_03\\_napaba\\_house\\_judicia.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.napaba.org/resource/resmgr/8_news_&_media/2021_03_napaba_house_judicia.pdf);

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-crimes-increased-nearly-150-2020-mostly-n-n1260264>;

<https://www.apano.org/2021/02/01/apano-condemns-pandemic-linked-anti-asian-hate-and-bias-incidents/>

- Supporting the skills, development, entrepreneurship, and protection of immigrant and refugee workers;
- Expanding opportunities for linguistic support and education;
- Strengthening Oregon's immigrant and refugee support infrastructure;
- Identifying and addressing systemic barriers and impacts to immigrant and refugee communities, including in areas such as exploitative workplace conditions, income inequality, health and education disparities, family separation, criminalization, and hate crimes and other forms of discrimination and violence.<sup>16</sup>

\* \* \*

Immigrants and refugees are part of families, schools, workplaces, houses of worship, and communities across Oregon. Indeed, at the ACLU of Oregon, more than one third of our staff are immigrants or refugees or the children of immigrants or refugees.

The ACLU of Oregon has supported and will continue supporting immigrants and refugees in courthouses, through legislation, and with other community-based efforts. However, we believe that our efforts and that of partner organizations and communities would be enhanced by the strategic coordination provided by an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement.

SB 778 is about the values that we share as Oregonians — the values of inclusiveness and belonging for all Oregonians including immigrant and refugee Oregonians.

**The ACLU of Oregon urges your support of SB 778.**

Thank you,



Sandy Chung  
Executive Director  
ACLU of Oregon

---

<sup>16</sup> See for example: [STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES BY WELCOMING ALL RESIDENTS](#)