

Fellow Oregonians serving on the House Judiciary committee:

My name is Joanne Mina and I've served communities of color in Central Oregon for many years and I've seen how cruel and dehumanizing the immigration process can be, particularly if people don't have access to adequate and fair legal representation. One in every ten children in Oregon live in a mixed status family or has a relative without documentation in our state. This hinders our future and perpetuates barriers for communities that already experience discrimination.

Universal Legal Representation expands the Equity Corps pilot program funded by Multnomah County, the City of Portland, and the State of Oregon to create statewide infrastructure for immigration legal defense, such as deportations, and prepare for any major changes in immigration policy. In Central Oregon where 1/4 of Latinos are born outside of the USA, the Latino Community Association has also been doing the work of providing free legal services to immigrant Oregonians in collaboration with Immigration Counseling Services and the results speak for themselves. Families that have a path to citizenship are more likely to live healthy lives and collectively help Oregon thrive.

I urge you to support Universal Legal Representation:

To create a statewide call center that would provide direct contacts and streamline access for those seeking help.

To give impacted communities the ability to choose their provider.

To trust community based organizations that already have deep connections to the community would oversee the program's policy and fiscal decisions and have an active role in coordinating.

To create a statewide representation team with embedded lawyers, through fellowships, at CBOs to ensure community members could turn to the organizations they already know and trust in times of need.

We must protect the rights of everyone who calls Oregon home and support their ability to thrive. By doing so, we can continue being a place that values families and communities.

Thank you.