
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

March 30, 2021

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon is proud to be part of the Fair Shot for All coalition, a unique partnership of more than 30 community-based organizations and labor unions who came together in 2014 to advance racial, gender and economic justice in Oregon. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon respectfully requests the committee's support of House Bill 3230 to protect Oregon families and ensure Oregon's immigrants have access to legal representation during deportation proceedings.

We stand with our reproductive justice partners who have long proclaimed that the fight for justice and equity does not end with having the right to make reproductive and sexual health decisions. A critical aspect of that work is advocating for people to have the power, resources, and protections necessary to raise and support their families in safe environments and healthy communities.

Our immigration system is broken. Despite a new president and administration, Oregon's immigrants are still very vulnerable to deportation, which is why we need accessible, culturally-responsive, and community-focused legal services. All Oregonians should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of where they were born. However, Oregonians who are immigrants and refugees—especially immigrant Oregonians who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color—have faced increased immigration enforcement that includes racial profiling, detention, family separation, and potential removal to countries where they have fled violence and persecution. Oregon can be a national leader in ensuring immigrants in our state know they are supported and will receive help during a difficult and traumatic process.

Many people in removal proceedings have valid legal claims to remain in the country and continue to contribute to Oregon's communities, but have no way to articulate these claims without the assistance of counsel. Universal representation safeguards due process by allowing immigrant Oregonians to access the rights afforded to them under existing law.

HB 3230, Universal Legal Representation, expands the successful 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. The program will also prepare Oregon for any major changes in national immigration policy by creating community-led pathways to citizenship.

Here are some key facts on Universal Legal Representation:

- The program would create a statewide call center that would provide direct contacts and streamline access for those seeking help.
- Impacted communities would be able to choose their provider.
- 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.
- The statewide representation team would embed lawyers, through fellowships, at CBOs to ensure community members could turn to the organizations they already know and trust in times of need.

Oregon is home to thousands of immigrants and refugees who live in both cities and towns statewide and are critical to the state's cultural and economic vitality. Immigrant Oregonians work in key Oregon industries, are essential workers, and own small businesses that contribute to the vibrancy of our communities. Even Oregonians protected by DACA and TPS are still vulnerable to these inequitable processes. This has disrupted our local communities and put Oregon's children at increased risk of poverty. According to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, one in every 10 Oregon children live with a family member without legal status.

We've already seen this same kind of community focused system in action. By taking the lessons learned from the Oregon Worker Relief Fund model, we can build a similar system that allows our communities of color to connect with the organizations they already know and trust to help them during this difficult time.

During the passage of the Reproductive Health Equity Act (2017), Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon advocated alongside coalition partners to ensure that people who could get pregnant and who would otherwise qualify for Medicaid if not for their immigration status were able to get coverage for the sexual, reproductive, and postpartum healthcare they need. It is within the same spirit and values of fairness and equity that we urge your support of HB 3230 and ensure every Oregonian can access their right to legal representation. Representation by an attorney is the single most determinative factor in deportation proceedings and improves someone's chances of staying with their family by 457 percent.

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. We urge your YES vote on HB 3230.

Sincerely,

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Interim Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon