

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

My name is Isa Peña and I am the Interim Executive Director of Causa, Oregon's immigrant rights organization and I am here to testify on behalf of over 30 organizations in support of House Bill 3230 to establish a Universal Representation fund to provide legal representation to all Oregonians who are at risk of deportation or need an attorney for affirmative immigration cases. Universal Representation would expand on the Equity Corps of Oregon (ECO) program and create a statewide infrastructure for immigration legal defense.

Everyday, I hear of stories of kids who are afraid to go to school because they fear that when they return home, their parents will not be there. I hear stories of young teens who chose to stay close to home instead of pursuing their academic dreams because they don't want to get a call that their family member has been picked up by ICE and they don't have the financial means to afford an attorney. I was that teen, and I still have fears that one day, ICE will come and pick up people I love and I won't be able to help. Universal Representation would help us have a fighting chance to keep our families together.

The Universal Representation fund would create:

- A statewide call center that would streamline the already complicated process of seeking immigration legal services;
- Enable community navigators to accompany individuals throughout the process;
- Create a client service fund to assist with legal fees and translation;
- Allow community based organizations that already have deep ties with the immigrant community to embed lawyers in their organizations to provide a community centered approach to legal services.

Under this model, Oregon would expand and capacitate Oregon's current non-profit legal service programs through the Oregon State Bar by creating a grant program for eligible immigration legal service providers. HB3230's model builds on the successes of the Oregon Worker Relief community-based service delivery system--in which services have been provided in most every county in the state to traditionally hard to reach immigrant populations.

This is a huge need for our community - Oregonians are 5.5 times more likely to be deported if they do not have legal representation, regardless of the merit of their case. We also know that one in every 10 Oregon children live with a family member without legal status, according to the Oregon Law Center. Children and their families live in fear of deportation everyday and the Universal Representation program can be a beacon of hope for those who need navigation and representation for immigration services but do not have the means to afford an attorney. I urge you to support HB 3230. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Isa Peña
Interim Executive Director, Causa Oregon