



TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
FROM: Nancy Haque, Executive Director, Basic Rights Oregon
DATE: 2/9/2022
RE: Support for SB 1543

Senator Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee,

Basic Rights Oregon strongly supports Senate Bill 1543, which would guarantee immigrants the right to legal representation during deportation proceedings. As the state's leading LGBTQ2SIA+ advocacy organization, we prioritize lived equality for all Oregonians—including immigrants—with an emphasis on racial justice.

In our country's legal system, everyone is supposed to be provided with a lawyer in court if they cannot afford one. This core value ensures our legal proceedings are fair, but unfortunately immigrants are not extended this same right when facing deportation. This results in many immigrants being deported even when they have valid legal claims to remain in the country and continue contributing to Oregon's communities.

You have the chance to change this dynamic by advancing SB 1543, also called Universal Legal Representation, which would give immigrants a chance to fully participate in their deportation cases with the assistance of legal counsel.

Basic Rights Oregon believes immigrants enrich our state's economy and culture, and LGBTQ2SIA+ immigrants of color can often face unique challenges because of their intersecting identities. Granting due process is a simple decision that can begin to level the playing field for these vulnerable communities.

And SB 1543 is sure to have results: Representation by an attorney improves someone's chances of remaining in Oregon by 457 percent. That means thousands of immigrants who otherwise would have been deported will have the chance to stay in Oregon, contribute to their communities, and live with their families.

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. And by creating a statewide call center, SB 1543 will provide direct contacts and streamline access for those seeking help.

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 SB 1543.

Thank you.