



## Oregon moms and caregivers fighting for gender, economic, and racial justice.

February 7, 2022

Senate Judiciary & Ballot Measure 110 Implementation Committee  
RE: Support for SB 1543

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation Committee,

Family Forward Oregon strongly supports SB 1543 which would ensure that Oregon's immigrants have access to legal representation during deportation proceedings. Our organization works to strengthen the economic security of mothers, caregivers, parents, and families of all backgrounds through bold policies. As members of the Fair Shot Coalition, we support this legislation as part of our ongoing effort for racial and immigrant justice.

Despite a new president and administration, Oregon's immigrants still remain very vulnerable to detention and deportation. ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) has dehumanized, abused, and criminalized people of color— particularly Latinx, Muslim, and Southeast Asian immigrant women, for decades, and continues to do so. The number of women detained and the proportion of women in detention in the U.S have also continued to rise. Women and girls made up 14.5 percent of the population detained by ICE in 2016, a 60 percent increase from 2009.<sup>1</sup> Immigrant women, mothers and caregivers in Oregon are the backbone of our families, communities, workplaces and places of worship, and should be kept safe in their communities.

That is why we urgently need accessible, culturally responsive, and community focused legal services, to ensure that immigrants with valid legal claims have access to representation and can remain in the country safely. Representation by an attorney is the single most determinative factor of the outcome in deportation proceedings, and improves someone's chances of staying with

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2019/10/21/475997/immigration-detention-dangerous-womens-health-rights/>

their family by 457 percent. This is critical for families across the state: according to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, one in every 10 Oregon children live with a family member without legal status.

Universal representation safeguards due process by allowing immigrant Oregonians to access the rights afforded to them under existing law. SB 1543 further 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.

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. We must protect immigrant women, mothers, and children and support their ability to thrive. By doing so, we can continue being a place that values community and families staying together. We urge your YES vote on SB 1543.

Sincerely,



Courtney Helstein  
Political Director  
Family Forward Oregon

