

Submitter: Keneth Crouse

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110
Implementation

Measure: SB1543

SUBJECT: Yes on Universal Representation

My name is Kenneth Crouse. I live in Lebanon, and I chair the Race Matters Circle of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Corvallis.

I am writing in support of Universal Legal Representation which would provide immigrant Oregonians with accessible, culturally responsive, and community focused legal services.

Many people in removal proceedings have valid legal claims to remain in the country and continue to contribute to Oregon's communities, but 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.

Representation by an attorney is the single most outcome determinative factor in deportation proceedings. Representation by an attorney improves someone's chances of staying with their family by 457 percent.

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.

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 (CBOs) 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 urban and rural areas 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.

I volunteer with the Oregon Community Asylum Network, and the two expenses that asylum seekers struggle with the most are housing and legal fees. Often their sponsor does not know how costly legal services can be and must ask for help to cover those expenses. Having access to affordable legal representation during the asylum process would greatly increase the chances of a successful asylum hearing and would lessen the financial load for the dedicated people who sponsor asylum seekers.

? 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.

? 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.

? All Oregonians should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of where they were born. But 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.

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.