

TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
FROM: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Policy Manager
RE: Support for SB 1543
DATE: February 9, 2022



Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to end hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today, and we build community power to dismantle systems and policies that drive hunger and poverty.

All Oregonians should be treated fairly regardless of where they were born. **We know that, due to a host of institutional and systemic challenges, Oregonians who are immigrants and refugees face double the rate of food insecurity compared to people born inside the United States.**

Oregon Food Bank urges the legislature to pass SB 1543 to ensure all Oregonians have access to legal counsel to help keep families together. Many people in deportation 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. This bill safeguards due process by allowing immigrant Oregonians to access the rights afforded to them under existing law. This is critical because representation by an attorney improves someone's chances of staying with their family by over 400%.

Oregonians who are immigrants work in key industries, are essential workers, and own small businesses that contribute to the vibrancy of our communities. But despite the many social, cultural and economic contributions of this community, immigration policy decisions often wrongfully target immigrant families and heighten a climate of fear. The cumulative impact of these policies has created a chilling effect that impacts families' sense of dignity. Many community members have reported not feeling safe accessing food assistance programs like SNAP, school meals, and even food pantries because of fear. No one should have to choose between eating and keeping your family together.

Fundamentally, we believe this bill is about fairness. **SB 1543 is an important step toward protecting the rights of everyone who calls Oregon home.**

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