

Submitter: Erika Leaf

On Behalf  
Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110  
Implementation

Measure: SB1543

I am writing in support of SB 1543 which would provide immigrant Oregonians with legal support during deportation proceedings. Despite a new president and administration, Oregon's immigrants are still very vulnerable to deportation which is why we need 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 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.

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.

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 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.

All of our Oregon neighbors should be treated with dignity and fairness. Making sure that when needed, immigrants have legal representation and assistance through a community organization they already know and trust is simply the right thing to do to achieve true justice in our system. We are all better off when everyone in the community is treated fairly and with compassion.

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. That is why I support this bill.

Thank you.

Erika Leaf  
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