

Re: Yes, on SB1543

Chair Prosanski, Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Committee,

My name is Diana D. and live in Hillsboro. I'm writing in support of SB 1543, Universal Legal Representation, which would provide immigrant Oregonian's legal support during a difficult and traumatic process.

Universal Legal Representation expands the 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, such as deportations, and prepare for any major changes in immigration policy.

Living in a foreign country was difficult. When I was only eleven years old, and my sister was 10 we were detained by an immigration patrol. I always lived with fear that someday my dreams could be banish by the unfair laws just for being undocumented. One misfortunate day while I was walking down the street with my sister, an immigration patron in Phoenix detained us, took our names, and drove us to an immigration detention center. It was a cold, and it was a fearful experience. We were incarcerated together with all other women of different ages and with different racial backgrounds. We were just thrown into that huge, cold four walled cell. Surrounded by many sad, disappointed, discouraging, and hopeless women faces; women whose dreams were about to be buried. We weren't provided with any kind of rights even with our young age. We weren't granted a phone call to call my mother who was desperately worried for my sister and I, she did not know where we were at. We weren't granted a lawyer or any other kind of human and constitutional rights that this country is supposed to provide; but since we weren't U. S citizens these rights were unavailable for us. Hours passed, for me it was the longest day of my life. It was frustrating not knowing what our future will held. Night came and we were finally liberated, this Immigration officer took my sister and me along with other women to an ICE vehicle and drove us directly to the US border. I cannot imagine people who have spent days, months, and years in a detention center and who do not have money to pay for legal representation and who end up being deported. I have also seen on the news how children and young adults are presenting themselves in immigration court without an attorney, this is not right and it should not happen.

Human Rights were not respected that day and it keeps on happening to thousands of undocumented people. That day it felt like if I was a young criminal whose only crime was wanting to come to a country where we can have a better life.

We know that the right legal representation can make a big difference in a person's case! A community member without legal representation is 5.5 times more likely to be deported regardless of the merit of their case. 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.

Oregon has been a great home for me and for many other undocumented families. Being separated from my family was the most horrible and scariest thing I have ever experienced. Because of this I urge you to pass SB 1543.

Thank you,

Diana D