

**Oregon State Bar testimony on
Senate Bill 1543
Senate Committee on Judiciary
and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
February 9, 2022**

Chair Prozanski, and members of the Committee,

The mission of the Oregon State Bar is to regulate the legal profession and improve the quality of legal services; support the judiciary and improve the administration of justice; and advance a fair, inclusive and accessible justice system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 1543, which directs badly needed funds toward immigration legal services. Improving access to the justice system is a key part of the Oregon State Bar's core mission. The Legal Services Program has consistently recognized immigration matters as an underserved legal need; in the [Barriers to Justice Report on the 2018 Oregon Legal Needs Study](#), immigration legal issues were identified as the most harmful legal issues for Oregonians with low incomes. For that reason, we are supportive of the steps the legislature is taking to improve access to justice for all Oregonians. We look forward to continuing our role in managing state funds directed toward legal services.

Background. Twenty-five years ago, the Oregon Legislature established the Legal Services Program (LSP) to manage state funding of civil legal aid, to draft regulations in the form of Standards and Guidelines, and to regulate the delivery of services and use of funds. The LSP's regulatory framework helps ensure that legal aid provides cost effective, high-quality services that are responsive to client needs throughout the state. This expertise can be adapted to help immigration legal service providers maintain similar high standards of quality and efficiency in their services.

Strategic Planning. The LSP has experience ensuring providers are responsive to community and regulatory guidelines. Over the years, the LSP model has been highly effective at directing state funds where the need is greatest, and has done so while keeping administrative costs extremely low. A key tool in achieving this outcome has been statewide community focused strategic planning.

Shared strategic planning where all providers coordinate on how to best reach the Oregonians most in need of assistance is a product of the LSP funding model. Shared planning means all providers are linked by a responsibility for every Oregonian in need, no matter what county a

particular provider serves. When funding changes, instead of there being competition between providers, resources are adjusted between providers to best serve the needs of the client community in accordance with the shared strategic plan.

Regulatory experience. As a regulatory entity, the LSP provider review process assesses providers against nationally recognized best practices for the delivery of legal services to people with low incomes. For example, the LSP has experience using the *American Bar Association Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid*, the federal Legal Services Corporation's Performance Criteria, and the American Bar Association's *Standards for Programs Providing Civil Pro Bono Legal Services to Persons of Limited Means*. As part of the Oregon State Bar, the LSP also has access to the Bar's experts in applying the *Oregon Rules of Professional Conduct* to the practice of law.

The Legal Services Program stands ready to adapt and respond to the unique needs of the immigration legal services community while continuing to manage funds directed to immigration legal services under this bill. We appreciate the opportunity to engage with community based organizations, immigration legal service providers, advocates, and stakeholders to reach a consensus that will allow us to address the legal needs of communities around Oregon.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Oregon State Bar.