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## Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

February 9, 2022

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chairs Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon is proud to be part of the Fair Shot for All coalition, a partnership of more than 30 community-based organizations and labor unions who work together to advance racial, gender and economic justice in Oregon. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon respectfully requests the committee's support of Senate Bill 1543 to protect Oregon families and ensure Oregon's immigrants have access to legal representation during deportation proceedings.

We stand with our reproductive justice partners who have long proclaimed that the fight for justice and equity does not end with having the right to make reproductive and sexual health decisions. A critical aspect of that work is advocating for people to have the power, resources, and protections necessary to raise and support their families in safe environments and healthy communities.

Our immigration system is broken. Despite a new president and administration, Oregon's immigrants are still very vulnerable to deportation. This is why we need accessible, culturally-responsive, and community-focused legal services. All Oregonians should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of where they were born. However, 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. Oregon can be a national leader in ensuring immigrants in our state know they are supported and will receive help during a difficult and traumatic process.

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. Even Oregonians protected by DACA and TPS are still vulnerable to these inequitable processes. With one in 10 Oregon children living with a family member without legal status, deportation is a costly and stressful process that disrupts communities, separates families, and pulls resources away from community members who already struggle to make ends meet<sup>1</sup>.

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. Universal representation safeguards due process by allowing immigrant Oregonians to access the rights afforded to them under existing law. We know that when immigrants facing deportation are provided adequate legal representation, they are five times more likely to win their case and remain in the country with their families.

SB 1543, 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. The program will also prepare Oregon for any major changes in national immigration policy by creating community-led pathways to citizenship.

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. With the passage of SB 1453, we can safeguard due process for thousands of immigrants here in Oregon. We know that representation by an attorney is the single most outcome determinative factor in deportation proceedings and improves someone's chances of staying with their family by 457 percent.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ocpp.org/2021/12/15/deportation-economy-harm/>

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During the passage of the Reproductive Health Equity Act (2017), Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon advocated alongside coalition partners to ensure that people who could get pregnant and who would otherwise qualify for Medicaid if not for their immigration status were able to get coverage for the sexual, reproductive, and postpartum healthcare they need. It is within the same spirit and values of fairness and equity that we urge your support of SB 1543 and ensure every Oregonian can access their right to legal representation.

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. We urge your YES vote on SB 1543

Sincerely,

Cassie Purdy  
Political Director  
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon