



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

February 9, 2022

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **Senate Bill 1543 to ensure Oregon’s immigrants have access to legal representation during deportation proceedings**. My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 85,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

In our union, we believe in and fight for our vision for a just society: where all workers are valued and all people respected, no matter where we are from or the color of our skin; where all families and communities can thrive; and where we leave a more just and equitable world for generations to come. **Therefore, we strongly support this bill as part of our ongoing work towards achieving racial and immigrant justice in Oregon.**

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 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. We are a highly diverse union with members from all walks of life, including immigrants. We have seen first-hand the contributions of immigrants and

recognize the integral role that they play in our past, present, and future. The last thing we want for our members in these circumstances is to have their families and communities torn apart due to lack of 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. **SEIU Oregon urges you to vote yes on SB 1543**

Thank you.

Alberto Gallegos
Political and Government Relations Organizer
SEIU, Oregon State Council