



To: Senate Judiciary Committee
From: Dana Hepper, Children's Institute
Date: February 9, 2022
Re: Support for Universal Representation, SB 1453

Children's Institute is an early childhood advocacy organization that uses research, practice, policy and advocacy to shift systems toward justice for families so that all Oregon's children, birth to grade 5, have access to opportunity through high-quality early care and education programs.

Children's Institute supports the passage of SB 1543 which would provide immigrant Oregonians with legal support during deportation proceedings. According to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, one in every 10 Oregon children live with a family member without legal status. Therefore, the future of Oregon is deeply intertwined with the health, well-being and education of immigrant families.

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 reality not only affects individuals - it affects families, children, and whole communities. Research confirms:

- Children in stable families can thrive, but separation from parents, especially during early childhood, has lasting impacts on children's growing brains.
- The stress caused by fear of being separated from parents puts children's growth and development at risk.
- Deportation of parents often causes emotional distress, poor physical and mental health and poverty for children.
- Even fear of deportation of self, family members and friends adversely affects enrollment in critical children's health and development supports, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and health, education and housing

programs among documented and undocumented immigrants alike. Participation in these programs benefits the health and well-being of children.

This bill safeguards due process by allowing immigrant Oregonians to access the rights afforded to them under existing law. Representation by an attorney improves someone's chances of staying with their family by 457 percent.

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 children, families and communities.