

Submitter: Naomi Halpern

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110
Implementation

Measure: SB1543

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

My name is Naomi Halpern and I live in Corvallis. I am writing in support of SB 1543 which would provide immigrant Oregonians with legal support during deportation proceedings. 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 urban and rural areas 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.

I volunteer with the Corvallis Multicultural Literacy Center working with and on behalf of immigrant Oregonians, both to help them obtain legal counsel and tutorship for the citizenship application, but also to support them in sharing their culture, effort, insight, and enthusiasm with the broader Corvallis community. It is heartbreaking to see someone struggling to stay near their family and in their home because of a lack of legal representation, especially when they have legal right to be here! I have been at deportation hearings where noncitizens were summarily dismissed and deported not because they didn't have a case, but because they didn't have representation. This is unjust, unreflective of our broader, collective care and dreams, and is irresponsible

to present and future Oregonian community.

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. But 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. Even Oregonians protected by DACA and TPS are still vulnerable to these inequitable processes. This has disrupted our local communities and put Oregon's children at increased risk of poverty.

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.

I urge you to pass SB 1543 and grant legal representation to Oregonians to stay in their home, stay with their family, and continue to contribute to our communities making Oregon more vital, prosperous, equitable, and inclusive.

Thank you.