

House Committee on Rules
Testimony in Support of SB 1560
February 21, 2022

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Fahey, Representatives Holvey, Valderrama, Wallan, and Zika,

For the record, my name is Natasha Haunsperger and I am here in my capacity as Chair of the Oregon Commission for Women.

I am strongly endorsing SB 1560, which proposes the removal of the term “alien” in Oregon state law and replacing it with a new term of “non-citizen.” Our state is a sanctuary state that welcomes immigrants and refugees. Our state has had a long history of providing that haven and safe refuge for those fleeing oppressive and corrupt regimes, failed states, desolate economies, and countries fueled by violence and armed conflicts.

1. OCFW works toward economic, social, political, and legal equity for the women of Oregon with particular focus on marginalized and underrepresented women of color. We do this through advocacy, public policy research, leadership development, and partnerships.
2. In our statutory role of bringing equity focus and community voice into Oregon policy making, OCFW strongly supports SB 1560.

As if it is not enough of a burden that our immigrants and refugees arrive here with deep and complex and often, untreated traumas, they continue to face and perceive disparities

Oregon Commission for Women

Chair:

Natasha Haunsperger

Vice-Chair:

Dr. Krista Parent

Commissioners:

Ugonna Enyinnaya
Dr. Maura Kelly
Camille Mercier
Angela Rico Cornwell, Esq.
Helen Richardson
May Saechao

Legislative Members:

Senator Deb Patterson
Representative Sheri Schouten

**Oregon Advocacy Commissions
Office Staff**

Albert Lee, Executive Director
Nancy Kramer, Policy & Research
Dr. Kyl Myers, Public Affairs

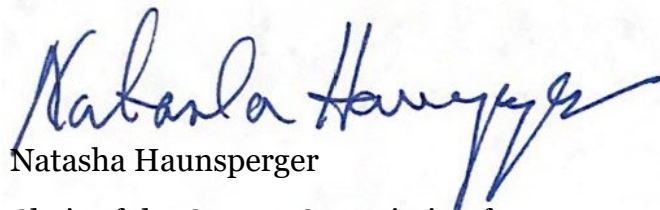


and structural power imbalances by being labeled, defined and categorized “as resident aliens.” Language matters, how we define and categorize groups matters because it can, as it does within the current framework, contribute to further isolation, marginalization, and building the public myth and narrative of the “other.” The “other,” that is often perceived as foreign, unknown, and even a threat to the existing order.

I was the other, the resident alien when I immigrated to United States in 2001 from war torn Croatia. My only identification labeled me a resident alien, and while I was, still am, utterly grateful and appreciative of the privilege to be admitted into this country, and given a chance for a new life, I felt the definition ascribed to me, clearly messaged that I was/am different. As a constant reminder that there was a newly ascribed legal identity, I had to embrace.

Based on my personal experience, I want to illuminate that such a label creates additional structural barriers to self-acceptance during an exceptionally burdensome and challenging process of integration and acculturation amidst learning a new language, cultural dynamics, and above all, laws. I applaud Senator Jama’s efforts and advocacy, and following the footsteps of the Biden Administration, which in April 2021 removed such language from the federal lexicon. Our state can and should remove such structural and archaic language of divide across socio-cultural frameworks. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Natasha Haunsperger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Natasha Haunsperger

Chair of the Oregon Commission for Women

