



**Advocating for Equity and Diversity
throughout Oregon**
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House Committee on Rules
Joint Testimony in Support of SB 1560
February 21, 2022

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

As leaders from the Oregon Advocacy Commissions, we write jointly to urge your support of Senate Bill 1560, which would replace “alien” with “noncitizen” in statutory references of individuals who are not citizens of the United States.

1. The Oregon Advocacy Commissions work individually and in concert to ensure economic, social, political, and legal equity for underrepresented and often marginalized communities. We do this through advocacy, public policy research, leadership development, and partnerships.

2. Today, the Oregon Advocacy Commissions write jointly on this bill. Together, we feel strongly and would like to share our thoughts. In our statutory role of bringing equity focus and community voice into Oregon policy making, the Oregon Advocacy Commissions strongly support SB 1560.

**Oregon Commission on
Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs**

Susan Soonkeum Cox, Co-Chair
Jacqueline Leung, Co-Chair
Legislative Members:
Senator Michael Dembrow
Representative Khanh Pham

**Oregon Commission
on Black Affairs**

Mariotta Gary-Smith, Chair
Dr. Angela Addae, Esq., Vice-Chair
Legislative Member:
Senator James I. Manning, Jr.

**Oregon Commission
on Hispanic Affairs**

Jonathan Chavez Baez, Chair
Ashley Espinoza Valdez, Vice-Chair
Legislative Member:
Representative Andrea Salinas

Oregon Commission for Women

Natasha Haunsperger, Chair
Dr. Krista Parent, Vice-Chair
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



Specifically on behalf of

- the Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs;
- the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs;
- the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs; and
- the Oregon Commission for Women,

we enthusiastically support SB 1560.

The immigrant community has become a driving force in the State of Oregon, not only economically, but in so many other ways which makes this state thrive. This type of language is not only archaic and dehumanizing, but it also alienates people's sense of belonging. It is crucial to remember that those who are part of this growing community are human beings, not aliens from another universe. Language is important and it matters. It is imperative to treat people with respect and dignity, regardless of their country of origin.

Language is powerful and gives clarity to ideas. In many of our communities, language has been used as a powerful tool to reduce, erase, and harm our people. Racial slurs and intentionally hateful terms have been used to shape the narrative of our communities - all direct results of language that has been used to define us in the Americas.

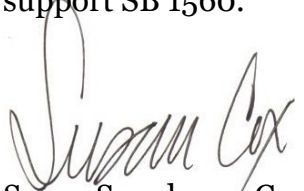
To have the word "alien" in government documents for this State continues to politically perpetuate reduced notions of personhood and humanity of immigrants as normal and acceptable and a part of our Oregon. We hope this step - while small and seemingly inconsequential - is the beginning of removing all language that is invalidating of our communities - from slavery, internment, Indigenous removal, and many others. If we are to represent ALL of us, the language needs to reflect that. This is an important place to start.

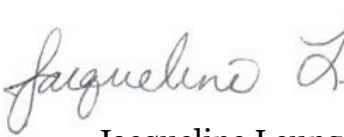


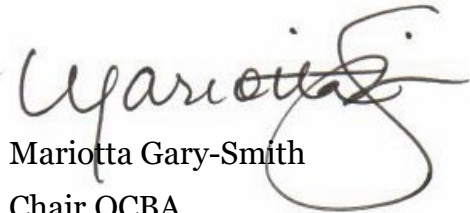
Removing such archaic and colonial language when addressing the needs and rights of migrants and refugees in Oregon leads the way in eradicating structural barriers and limitations within the existing bureaucratic apparatus. Many of us have been uprooted from our home countries due to armed conflicts, genocide, natural disasters and/or failed economies, and pursued a more prosperous and equitable life in the United States. Many of us arrive in Oregon with complex and deep layers of unaddressed and untreated trauma. Being labeled as an “alien,” only furthers our oppression, disregards us as fully human with complete human rights, and others us with malice and contempt.

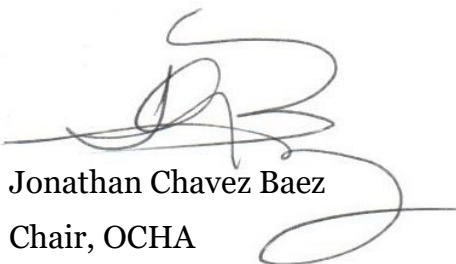
According to the American Immigration Council 2018 Report, “more than two in five immigrants in Oregon are naturalized U.S. citizens.” As our state continues to welcome immigrants and refugees, it is so timely and relevant to reform our immigration-language frameworks. When we discuss systems and structures, this is an integral part of systems and structures. The words employed connote specific meaning and color the way that others receive us and shapes our own view of ourselves. It is time to stop dividing and embrace the humanity of all who call Oregon home.

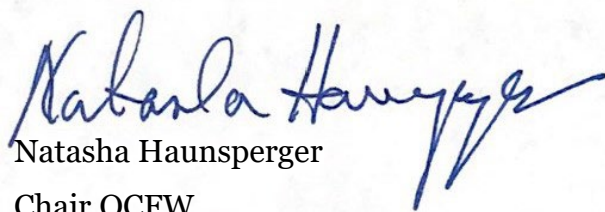
On behalf of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions and the noncitizens we represent, we firmly support SB 1560.


Susan Soonkeum Cox
Co-Chair, OCAPIA


Jacqueline Leung
Co-Chair OCAPIA


Mariotta Gary-Smith
Chair OCBA


Jonathan Chavez Baez
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