
January 26, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary
From: **Stephen Manning, Innovation Law Lab**
Re: Support for Universal Representation SB 627

Chair Prosanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee.

My name is Stephen Manning. I am the Executive Director of Innovation Law Lab, an Oregon-based nonprofit, and a member of Oregon Worker Relief, a statewide coalition that is currently entrusted, with among other things, the co-administration of the Universal Representation Fund.

Universal Representation is a community-driven approach to delivering legal services to immigrants and refugees modeled after the successful Equity Corps of Oregon pilot and Oregon Worker Relief system. It combines the best of both. It includes a powerful and highly successful collaboration with the Oregon State Bar. The purpose is to provide legal services and supports to immigrants and refugees on immigration matters so that they can thrive in Oregon and contribute to our collective prosperity.

According to a recent report by the Oregon Center for Public Policy, deportation weakens the state's economy, harms families who lose wages following an immigration arrest, and, most devastatingly, wreaks psychological and financial harm on children who lose a parent to deportation. Representation by an attorney in immigration court can, and does, mitigate these harms, and lowers the risk of Oregonians being deported.

Indeed, the report estimates that deportation reduces the amount of financial support available to an estimated 3,500 Oregon children by \$196 million. Universal Representation will contribute to our collective prosperity. Powerful

empirical evidence shows that immigrant and refugee inclusive practices, such as Universal Representation, raise the level of our collective prosperity.

SB1543, which codified Universal Representation into law in 2022, has allowed us to expand our program to serve some of our most vulnerable Oregonians. We have built and continue to build the much needed centralized state infrastructure to provide quality legal services to folks who need them, when they need them, and where they need them.

Since its launch, thousands of Oregonian and hundreds of Oregon families have benefited. Just a few of our hard-fought victories include:

- Enrolling over 2,700 people, 1000 over the last year, and almost 200 of them are unaccompanied minors.
- Serving over 600 minors, more than 250 of them unaccompanied to get access to legal services.
- Creating a centralized statewide call center for folks who have active cases to get updates on their case.

The program needs continued and expanded support in order to continue to provide these vital services. SB 627 provides the necessary funding to continue to protect and promote due process and justice for everyone. All Oregonians are entitled to due process, and this bill will only ensure that immigrant and refugee Oregonians have access to immigration counsel.

I urge you to continue the state's support and pass SB 627.

Thank you,

STEPHEN W MANNING