

March 3, 2023

Re: Support for SB 697 & 698

Thank you, Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cameron Coval and I am the executive director of Pueblo Unido PDX, a nonprofit that connects immigrant communities with legal, social, and Indigenous language interpretation services. I co-founded Pueblo Unido in April 2017 to help community members navigate complex legal and social service systems and overcome financial, technological, literacy, and linguistic barriers. Our work aims to ensure access to essential human rights and services so that our communities can be safe, feel supported, and thrive. One of the ways I believe our communities can realize these rights is through streamlined and automated criminal record expungement for non-person crimes through SB 697 & 698. Thank you for considering my testimony in support of these bills.

One of the legal services Pueblo Unido tries to connect our community members with is criminal record expungement. We want to help people actualize their legal right to expungement under the law. Unfortunately, due to the lack of free legal services, the lack of non-metropolitan area legal services, and the lack of consistent and free language interpretation, our experience has been that it is very hard for our immigrant, refugee, and non-native English speaking neighbors to get their records expunged. Pueblo Unido would like to correct the inequality in expungement access in Oregon. The people least likely to be able to get their record expunged are often the people who need it most for quality employment, housing, and more: people with disabilities, rural Oregonians, immigrants, refugees, and people who do not speak English.

SB 697 & 698 present an opportunity for the legislature to move toward equality and accessibility by providing technical fixes to the current expungement law, by removing the burdensome and alienating fingerprinting and filing requirements, and by removing fines and fees as a barrier to expungement that keeps the lowest-income Oregonians from clearing their records. But most importantly, SB 697 & 698 provide for automation of expungement of non-person crimes in Oregon. We believe the only way to give all our community members an equal opportunity to clear their records is through automation.

These bills represent an investment in our community members who are not often given equal opportunity or second chances. SB 697 & 698 provide both second chances and an equal opportunity to access them. Please join me in supporting the most marginalized members of our community through accessible and affordable criminal record expungement through SB 697 & 698.

Sincerely,

Cameron Coval

Executive Director

Pueblo Unido PDX