

February 5th, 2025

TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary  
FROM: Grace Fortson, Our Children Oregon  
SUBJECT: Support for SB 703

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

Our Children Oregon urges you to stand in support of SB 703. When we ensure that families have access to legal support, we ensure healthier happier families and children at the same time that we save the state money.

To give context for the scope of impact, 21% of children in Oregon come from immigrant families and 29% of children in immigrant families have resident parents that are not US citizens ([KIDS COUNT Data Center](#)) as of 2022.

In 2020, I had the honor of participating in ethnographic research here in Oregon that focused on livelihoods of refugee women in Portland in the context of the pandemic. Through this research, which you can find in the International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, we learned a great deal about the exclusion of migrants from social services and the devastating impact that could have on individuals and families.

I recall interviewing one woman who worked in precarious employment in order to cover basic necessities for herself and her family. Her job did not include healthcare nor surplus income to cover emergency or even baseline medical expenses. She specifically recognized that her status as a refugee was the primary barrier to receiving any form of government assistance,

including healthcare. Due to this gap in support, Oregonians are placed in positions of uncertainty around their basic needs.

OCO supports SB 703 as this bill calls for DHS to allocate grants to help noncitizens get lawful immigration status. When immigrants and refugees' legal status are prioritized, this can lead to more job mobility, more financial stability, and more housing stability, which results in improved health outcomes. Additionally, when immigrant Oregonians are able to secure their deserved legal status, they can obtain OHP and Medicaid, leading to improved access to vital health resources. Immigrant and refugee children and children with immigrant or refugee caretakers can have more capacity to thrive when their families' needs are met.

Immigrants and refugees are important members of our communities, and we must recognize the connection between rights to documented and/or more permanent status and access to quality healthcare. We thank you for your time and efforts to improve the wellbeing of children and families in Oregon. **We urge your support of SB 703.**

Thank you,

Grace Fortson, Policy and Advocacy, Our Children Oregon

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