



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

My name is Verónica Núñez, and I am the Director of Leadership and Advocacy at Adelante Mujeres, a nonprofit organization based in Forest Grove, Oregon. Adelante Mujeres is dedicated to empowering Latina women and their families to achieve personal and collective transformation. Each year, we serve approximately 17,000 individuals across Washington County through programs in early childhood education, adult education, sustainable agriculture, advocacy, mental health, and small business development. Our mission is to provide holistic education and empowerment opportunities that foster leadership, economic independence, and healthy families within the Latino community, primarily serving low-income Latina women and their families.

I am here to express my wholehearted support for **SB 703/HB 2788, Pathways to Protection and Citizenship**. This critical initiative allocates funding to the Department of Human Services to award grants to nonprofit legal service providers, covering the cost of legal services for individuals seeking immigration relief. This bill has the power to save and strengthen families, improve outcomes in ODHS programs, bolster our workforce, and strengthen Oregon's general fund by helping immigrants transition from state services like Healthier Oregon to the Oregon Health Plan (OHP).

Currently, up to one-third of Oregonians without immigration status are eligible for legal status under federal law. Yet, over 25,000 Oregonians are unable to access these opportunities due to the high cost of legal services. These individuals live in fear, are excluded from mainstream employment, and struggle to support their families. Immigrant and refugee communities make up more than 13% of Oregon's workforce, yet the financial burden of legal services prevents many from securing stable immigration status.

As an immigrant, I have witnessed firsthand how families like mine contribute to the growth and vitality of our communities through hard work, investments, and a deep commitment to making Oregon a better place for all. At Adelante Mujeres, we provide legal services alongside our other programs, and we see the struggles families face. These families are essential to the growth and sustainability of our state, yet the cost of legal services remains a significant barrier.

SB 703/HB 2788 can change this reality, offering hope, stability, and opportunity to thousands of Oregon families. Thank you for your time, your consideration, and for standing with all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Verónica Núñez
Leadership and Advocacy Director
Adelante Mujeres