

Submitter: John Pitney
On Behalf Of: Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB703

Chair Prozanski Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the committee

My Name is Rev. John Pitney:

I am a retired United Methodist minister from Bend OR and also a volunteer with the Creation Justice Team of Oregon Interfaith Power and Light, at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO).

Please do everything you can to enact SB 703/HB 2788, Pathways to Protection and Citizenship. This will activate funding for the Department of Human Services to award grants to nonprofit legal service providers that cover the cost of clients legal services. This bill will save and strengthen families, improve outcomes in ODHS programs, bolster our workforce, and strengthen the general fund by helping immigrants transition from state services like Healthier Oregon to OHP.

Up to 1/3 of Oregonians without an immigration status are actually eligible under federal law for an immigration status. That is over 25,000 Oregonians who, but for the high cost of legal services, are living in fear, out of the employment mainstream, and unable to support their families. Immigrant and refugee communities make up more than 13% of our state's workforce, yet legal costs prevent many Oregonians from obtaining a more secure immigration status.

For decades, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, along with many partners across Oregon, has been a vocal advocate of for immigrant rights and a service and legal services provider for marginalized Oregonians. My children and grandchildren are well-to-do white citizens of Oregon, privileged with all the rights and protections of our standing. We advocate for bills like SB 703 so the ones who really need the safety and funding can have it to help them stay put during this treacherous time and thrive as honored citizens of our state.

Thank you for your time and for standing with all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Rev. John Pitney, Volunteer at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
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