

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

For the record, my name is Frank So.

I serve as Executive Director of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. We are proud to partner with our 15-member Christian denominations and multi-faith partners that represent nearly 750 congregations throughout our state. I am the proud son of two immigrants who love this great state and this country. Many of my colleagues at EMO are also immigrants or the children of immigrants so we get why this bill is so crucial for the social fabric of our community and the economic growth of our state.

Through our SOAR Legal Immigration Services program, we serve more than 2000 Oregonians statewide annually with life-changing legal representation and support.

SB 703, The Pathways to Protection and Citizenship Act will save and strengthen Oregon families, bolster our workforce, and strengthen Oregon's general fund.

Over 25,000 undocumented Oregonians are eligible for some kind of legal status, obtaining that status means freedom from deportation and family separation. Nobody benefits when we deport our hardworking friends and family because they can't afford legal services.

Immigrant and refugee communities make up more than **13% of our state's workforce**, and **64% of those in crop production** yet legal costs prevent many from obtaining a more secure status. This bill's one-time support of Oregonians to offset these legal costs will stabilize our workforce. SB 703 will also strengthen Oregon's General Fund. When Oregonians secure an immigration status, our neighbors no longer need to rely on Oregon-funded programs, such as Healthier Oregon, but can instead benefit from federally supported programs, such as Medicaid.

This bill is about ensuring every last Oregonian who has a pathway to status under federal law can obtain that status. This includes Dreamers and many of the brave men and women who served alongside us in Iraq and Afghanistan who are at risk of deportation because they can't access legal services.

I thank you for your support of this important bill and for standing with all hard working Oregonians.