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To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Martha Sonato, Oregon Law Center
Re: Support for HB 4111
Date: February 04, 2026

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Wallan and Chotzen, and members of the committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support for HB 4111 on behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC).

My name is Martha Sonato, and I am a legislative and policy advocate at the Oregon Law Center (OLC). OLC is a civil legal aid organization that provides high-quality legal services, free of charge, to low-income Oregonians statewide. Access to justice is a cornerstone of our organization's mission. Our clients come to our organization on a range of issues impacting their lives – from housing to family law issues.

Over the last couple of months, we have been working closely with OR-AFL-CIO, NWJP, and PCUN on the concept before you today. HB 4111 is a three-prong policy that strengthens access to justice in our court system, clarifies protections for employees who lawfully update work documents, and strengthens Oregon's anti-profiling law. My testimony today focuses on the civil court and employment provisions.

HB 4111 amends Chapter 40, which is our Oregon Evidence Code, to make immigration status inadmissible in civil court unless it is essential to establish a party's claim for relief. When someone pursues justice through our courts because they were wrongfully harmed – whether through discrimination, domestic and sexual violence, or wage theft, they deserve a fair and unbiased trial.

Too often, we see immigration status raised in civil cases to intimidate individuals from seeking relief through our court system for their legal matter. Oftentimes, immigration status is not relevant to the proceeding, but when it's brought in, this causes a chilling effect in immigrant communities. Some choose to continue pursuing their case, and others choose not to.

HB 4111 provides a uniform procedure throughout the state when it comes to immigration status in civil court. The core idea is that immigration is not admissible unless it's essential to a claim for relief. There are two exceptions to that general idea. When a civil plaintiff is awarded future lost wages or reinstatement in a *post-trial proceeding*.

The Oregon Law Center's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services.



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The bill also establishes procedural requirements for a party seeking to introduce evidence of immigration status, including the filing of a confidential written motion and in camera hearings.

Our court should always be a place for individuals to seek impartial justice, without fear that their immigration status will be brought in and used against them. We urge you to support this impactful change in our evidence statute and join the handful of states such as Washington and California to increase access to justice.

Employment Retaliation

HB 4111 ensures that if a worker makes a *lawful* update in work authorization documentation, (for example, going from DACA or a green card to citizenship,) their employer cannot fire, demote, or otherwise penalize them. HB 4111 ensures that workers can follow the law without fear that doing so will get them fired. Importantly however, it also does not change the existing law that workers without current legal work authorization documents also cannot legally work.

HB 4111 is part of the 2026 Immigrant Justice Package and is backed by a broad coalition of immigrant justice advocates, civil liberties groups, unions, and community-based organizations. I urge you to support these community-led policies to protect the freedom of all Oregonians.

Thank you,

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