



**Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council**  
6401 SE Foster ▪ Portland, OR 97206

March 30, 2021

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **House Bill 3230 to ensure Oregon’s immigrants have access to legal representation during deportation proceedings**. My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 85,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

In our union, we believe in and fight for our vision for a just society: where all workers are valued and all people respected, no matter where we are from or the color of our skin; where all families and communities can thrive; and where we leave a more just and equitable world for generations to come. **Therefore, we strongly support this bill as part of our ongoing work towards achieving racial and immigrant justice in Oregon.**

Despite having a more progressive president and administration, Oregon’s immigrants are still very vulnerable to deportation which is the reason we need accessible, culturally-responsive, and community-focused legal services.

Many people in removal proceedings have valid legal claims to remain in the country and continue to contribute to Oregon’s communities, but no way to articulate these claims without the assistance of counsel. Universal representation safeguards due process by allowing immigrant Oregonians to access the rights afforded to them under existing law.

**Representation by an attorney is the single most outcome determinative factor in deportation proceedings. Representation by an attorney improves someone’s chances of staying with their family by 457%.**

Regardless of whether we were born in Oregon or decided to move here, we are all Oregonians. And all Oregonians should be treated with dignity and respect. But Oregonians who are immigrants and refugees, especially immigrant Oregonians who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color, have faced increased immigration enforcement that includes racial profiling, detention, family separation, and potential removal to countries where they have fled violence and persecution.

Universal Legal Representation expands the successful Equity Corps pilot program funded by Multnomah County, the City of Portland, and the State of Oregon to create statewide infrastructure for immigration legal defense. The program will also prepare Oregon for any major changes in national immigration policy by creating community-led pathways to citizenship.

Here are some key facts on Universal Legal Representation:

- The program would create a statewide call center that would provide direct contacts and streamline access for those seeking help.
- Impacted communities would be able to choose their provider.
- Community based organizations that already have deep connections to the community would oversee the program's policy and fiscal decisions and have an active role in coordinating.
- The statewide representation team would embed lawyers, through fellowships, at CBOs to ensure community members could turn to the organizations they already know and trust in times of need.

Oregon is home to thousands of immigrants and refugees who live in both cities and towns statewide, and are critical to the state's cultural and economic vitality. Immigrant Oregonians work in key Oregon industries, are essential workers, and own small businesses that contribute to the vibrancy of our communities. We are a highly diverse union with members from all walks of life, including immigrants. We have seen first-hand the contributions of immigrants and recognize the integral role that they play in our past, present, and future. The last thing we want for our members in these circumstances is to have their families and communities torn apart due to lack of legal representation.

We must protect the rights of everyone who calls Oregon home and support their ability to thrive. By doing so, we can continue being a place that values families and communities. **SEIU Oregon urges you to vote yes on HB 3230.**

Thank you,

Alberto Gallegos  
Political and Government Relations Organizer  
SEIU, Oregon State Council