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Dear Chair Bynum and members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

Today I write in support of HB 3230 and the -1 amendment. This bill will provide immigrant Oregonians with the help they need to navigate the byzantine immigration system and related social services.

In Multnomah County, we have recognized for several years that all of our communities benefit by investing in universal legal navigation and representation services. In 2017, as immigrants and refugees around the country were facing a sustained assault by the Trump Administration, I collaborated with our community based service providers and the City of Portland to establish a universal legal representation and navigation program. Over the four years that program has operated, hundreds of families in Multnomah County have been able to access critical services to navigate the legal immigration system.

By expanding this program statewide, Oregon will be making a groundbreaking investment in one of our most important resources: the immigrant communities who sustain our economy and invigorate our nation by becoming new Americans. By investing in organizations that are working directly with and alongside these communities, we will be able to better serve individuals and families and ensure the services they receive are culturally-informed and language accessible.

Our national immigration system is broken. And while I am hopeful that the new administration will be able to work with Congress to overhaul this confusing and inefficient system, in the meantime we must do everything in our power to support the Oregonians who are struggling to navigate it.

HB 3230 as amended will be a significant step towards creating a more just and equitable Oregon.

Sincerely,

Jessica Vega Pederson
Multnomah County Commissioner