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# A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

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TO: Chair Bynum  
Vice-Chairs Noble & Power  
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FR: Jacob Finkelman, Oregon AFL-CIO

RE: HB 3230, Support for Universal Representation

March 30, 2021

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process, including workers of all nationalities and citizenship statuses. The Oregon AFL-CIO strongly supports HB 3230 which would ensure Oregon's immigrants have access to legal representation during deportation proceedings. Despite a new president and administration, Oregon's immigrants are still very vulnerable to deportation which is why we need accessible, culturally responsive, and community focused legal services.

1 in 8 workers in Oregon is an immigrant<sup>1</sup> -- many of whom have continued to work round-the-clock during COVID-19 to keep food on our tables, to care for our loved ones, and to keep our economy running. 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. Immigrant Oregonians are part of our families, communities and are critical workers in our economy. They should have legal representation when they are facing possible deportation.

HB 3230 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.

Many people in removal proceedings have valid legal claims to remain in the country and continue to contribute to Oregon's communities, but have 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 percent.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-oregon>

Oregon is home to thousands of immigrants and refugees who live across the state, and are critical to the state's cultural and economic vitality. Immigrant Oregonians disproportionately work in some of the industries hardest hit by COVID-19 and some that have been most essential during the pandemic, including manufacturing, food service, and agriculture. They undoubtedly contribute to the success of our economy and the vibrancy of our communities.

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. We urge your YES vote on HB 3230.