

Testimony Submitted by
Chris Coughlin, Policy and Legislative Lead
Oregon Consumer Justice

To the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation

February 7, 2022

Regarding: Support for SB 1543

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

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and am pleased to submit this testimony on behalf of Oregon Consumer Justice. Launched in 2020, Oregon Consumer Justice (OCJ) is a nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that all people in Oregon experience a safe and fair marketplace, free from predatory and exploitative practices. We are especially focused on those communities that have been historically and systematically excluded or harmed by unfair practices.

Our priorities are guided by community voices, and we strategically focus on opportunities to:

- balance and re-imagine systems by advocating for laws that protect consumers and systems to ensure those laws are effective,
- communicate to shift the narrative about consumer justice and achieve equitable outcomes, and
- build and strengthen consumer access to justice.

OCJ is committed to working towards equitable access to justice. SB 1543 would provide immigrant Oregonians with accessible, culturally responsive, and community focused legal service during deportation proceedings.

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 legal counsel. This bill 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 important factor in deportation proceeding outcomes. Representation by an attorney improves someone's chances of staying with their family by 457 percent.

A permanent statewide Universal Navigation and Representation program embeds access in the community. Universal representation promotes immigrant inclusion, immigrant justice, and Oregon's collective prosperity. By taking the lessons learned from the Oregon Worker Relief Fund model, we can build a similar system that allows members of our communities of color who need this essential legal assistance to connect with the organizations they already know and trust to help them during this difficult time.

We must protect the rights of everyone who calls Oregon home and provide access to justice. We urge you to support SB 1543.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your service to Oregon communities.