



Date: February 7, 2022  
To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation  
From: Ames Kessler, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon  
Re: Support for HB 1543

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1543. My name is Ames Kessler and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon (PHFO). PHFO is a statewide anti-poverty advocacy organization with a small staff of under 15 members. We understand that leadership comes from those with lived experience and that hunger and poverty do not exist on their own, but rather a result of overlapping systems of oppression that create layers of privilege and inequity. Our values and work are centered in creating systemic changes to end hunger.

PHFO is in support of SB 1543 which would provide immigrant Oregonians with legal support 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.

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. 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 outcome determinative factor in deportation proceedings. Representation by an attorney improves someone's chances of staying with their family by 457 percent.

All Oregonians should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of where they were born. 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.

We've already seen this same kind of community focused system in action. By taking the lessons learned from the Oregon Worker Relief Fund model, we can build a similar system that allows our communities of color to connect with the organizations they already know and trust to help them during this difficult time.

For these reasons, PHFO urges your support for HB 1543.

Sincerely,

Ames Kessler  
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon