

February 7, 2022

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 101 Implementation
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 1543

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 1543. My name is Sandra Joos and I live in Portland, OR.

I'm writing to support SB 1543: Instituting Legal Universal Representation. SB 1543 is a 2022 Children's Agenda priority concept. All Oregonians, no matter their place of origin, deserve equal treatment to remain with their children and families. Without adequate monetary support, thousands of Oregon immigrant households face the risk of being deported, being removed from their homes and families simply because they cannot afford an attorney. SB 1543 will provide Oregonians with a legal system that is fair, avoids unjust deportations, and works to keep families together across the state. Representation by an attorney is the most determinative factor of deportation proceedings. Individuals with representation are 15 times more likely to remain lawfully in the United States than those who lack counsel.

Oregonians that undergo complicated deportation proceedings are not guaranteed an attorney to represent them in court. Undocumented immigrants are more than 5.5 times more likely to be deported without legal representation. Not only does this affect Oregon's social and economic well-being, but children face enormous burdens by being at risk of losing their fathers, mothers, grandparents, and caretakers to deportation.

For the more than 85,000 Oregon children — one in 10 of all Oregon children — who live in a household with an undocumented person, sudden immigration enforcement actions have been shown to induce depression, severe "toxic stress," psychological trauma, and behavioral health complications, and additionally puts them at risk for entering the foster care system. As well, households in which an adult family member has been deported face an average 45% reduction in income, impacting the economic and housing stability as well as the physical and mental well-being of families.

The implementation of Universal Representation (SB 1543) will include the following:

- Community-embedded navigators would guide Oregonians at risk of deportation into the program, supported by a statewide call center and centralized clearinghouse.
- The Oregon State Bar would administer funding to substantially expand the capacity of existing legal service providers.
- Additional attorneys would be placed at Community Based Organizations all across the state, providing legal services to community members at culturally and geographically accessible locations.

- A client service fund would ensure that related costs, like filing fees and interpretation, would not be a barrier to accessing representation.
- A governance structure made of Community-Based Organizations from across the state would guide the program and ensure the community continues to design, drive, and implement the program.

I support SB 1543 to protect the rights of everyone who calls Oregon home. Universal Representation will strengthen public trust in our legal system while promoting stable and thriving communities. I urge you to support SB 1543 to ensure Oregon children and families can stay together.

Sincerely,
Dr. Sandra Joos