



VOICES UNITED.
OPPORTUNITY REIMAGINED.

2/9/2022

Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 1543

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

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is advancing equitable policymaking and whole-child advocacy statewide to ensure our children and youth have what they need, regardless of their race or where they live, to thrive by activating meaningful change for children and families. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We collect, analyze, and elevate data and research that, alongside lived experience, drives conversations in support of Oregon's future. We partner alongside ~120 organizations through The Children's Agenda to uplift and advocate for community-driven, equity-centered policies and investments that will improve the lives of Oregon's children and families.

SB 1543: Instituting Legal Universal Representation 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 and separated from their families and livelihoods simply because they cannot afford an attorney.

Oregonians that undergo complicated deportation proceedings are not guaranteed an attorney to represent them in court. Undocumented immigrants are more than 5.5 times likely to be deported without legal representation. Not only does this affect Oregon's social and economic well-being - some \$4.8 billion of the state's annual economic output - but children face enormous burdens by being at risk of or 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 can induce depression, severe toxic stress, psychological trauma, and behavioral health complications.

The Children's Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.



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As well, households in which an adult family member has been deported face an average 45% reduction in income, greatly destabilizing economic and housing security as well as the physical and mental well-being for families. Deportation of one or both parents also puts children at significantly greater risk for entering the foster care system.

SB 1543: Instituting Legal Universal Representation 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.

The implementation of Universal Representation 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.

We support SB 1453 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. We urge you to support SB 1453 to ensure Oregon children and families can stay together.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

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View the 2022 Children's Agenda at
www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2022-childrens-agenda