

SUBJECT: Yes, to SB 1543

President Prosanski, Vice President Thatcher, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Karen Caudillo and I live in Multnomah County. I am writing to you in support of SB 1543, the Universal Legal Representation Act. This law supports our community members during a very difficult and traumatic process. I work at a women-led non-profit called Adelante Mujeres in Washington, Oregon. Every day I see families struggling to stay together, that is why I'm writing this.

1. This law establishes:

- a. A statewide call center that helps connect people seeking legal representation with an organization or attorney.
- b. A statewide representation team that integrates attorneys into community organizations.
- c. It allows our community to choose their legal representative within the program.
- d. It allows community attorneys to help start applications to adjust status if there is immigration reform or capacity in the program and immigration laws change. This program supports people who are at high risk of deportation. So, they would be ready if there was a significant change in the immigration process.

2. How this issue affects my family and loved ones:

I'm a DACA recipient and see folks struggling every day to access legal representation. My uncle was a clown, a die-hard punk fan, and an overall happy person before his time in an immigration center. My uncle was deported about six years ago after living in the United States for decades. At the time, I was the only person in my family with a valid driver's license to visit him. Sadly, during his last court date, my Algebra professor in college didn't allow me to make up a test and attend court to say goodbye to my uncle. It was painful to see my uncle treated inhumanly and without any regard. His lawyer took advantage of him and didn't fight for him. My family member was never the same after being locked up for simply driving without a license. Fear of never seeing a loved one is the reality many of us live with every day. I have aunts and uncles who still live in fear.

My parents live in a different state, where they do not have a driver's license. Recently, I had to fundraise to cover my dad's legal fees after being pulled over without a driver's license in a county that works with ICE. My dad drives out of necessity in Florida. Folks in Oregon already have a sanctuary policy and now have a real opportunity to stop family separations by passing Universal Representation. At any moment, anyone from our greater social circle can go from a simple ticket to full-on deportation. It was my dad's birthday recently, and my sister and I sent him a card. She wrote, "I can't wait to live in a country where we don't have to fear separation" it's realities like this that

empowered me to share my experience with the Oregon legislature. I've already seen one family member deported and currently have three aunts/uncles in deportation proceedings. Each is struggling to make ends meet to afford a fair and dignified day in immigration court. Undocumented folks are beyond disassociated from the trauma that comes from navigating a broken system with the odds stacked against us. Support with universal legal representation will be such a relief for undocumented communities in the state of Oregon who deserve to be treated fairly and with dignity under the law.

3. How This Bill Will Have a Positive Impact on Oregonians

a. Equality and Justice

i. Universal representation comes from the fundamental freedom for a fair process.

1. Oregonians believe in constitutional rights and human rights, which include being treated fairly and with dignity under the law.
2. This proposal would give people in detention centers or deportation proceedings legal help.
3. Legal representation can give people more significant opportunities like this hard-working parent—to fight and present their case precisely with a legal accompaniment.
4. Human and constitutional rights describe that everyone involved in this story has rights (especially children have the right to have a family, the state must ensure their well-being not only economically but also emotionally)

ii. This principle ensures that our legal system is fair, strengthens public trust in our legal institutions, and promotes stable and prosperous communities.

1. We know that legal representation makes a big difference in a case. A community member without legal representation is 5.5 times more likely to be deported regardless of the validity of their case.
2. Even Oregonians protected by DACA and TPS remain vulnerable to these unfair processes.

b. A trusted and effective solution

i. The Universal Legal Representation Act is a collaborative, community-centered effort.

ii. Our community could work with organizations they already know and trust to access that legal help.

1. We have already seen a similar system in action. We've taken what we learned with the Oregon Workers' Relief system to create a program that equally connects members of our community with the organizations they already trust.

c. Quality of life for children

i. This family is part of the Oregon statistic that one in ten children lives in a mixed-status family. It is a relatively high number, and we must provide the necessary resources to be fair and inclusive, especially when keeping families together

1. Based on data from the Oregon Center for Public Policy, one in ten children in Oregon lives in a mixed-status family.

d. Economy

- i. Oregon is home to thousands of immigrants and refugees living in cities and towns. Oregon immigrants work in several key industries, are essential workers, and contribute to the well-being of our state and communities.
- ii. Many deportation proceedings have valid legal claims to remain in the country and continue contributing to Oregon communities. However, they have no way to explain their case without the help of an attorney.

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.

Thank you,

Karen Caudillo