



February 8, 2022

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 implementation  
From: **Isa Peña, Innovation Law Lab**  
Re: Support for 1560

Chair Prosanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee:

My name is Isa Peña and I am the Director of Strategy at Innovation Law Lab, an Oregon-based non-profit that leverages advocacy, technology and law for immigrant and refugee justice. I am speaking in support of SB 1560.

Senate Bill 1560 aims to update statutory references to individuals who are not a citizen or national of the United States and replace the word “alien” with “noncitizen.” This is a straightforward simple policy that recognizes that language can be harmful and that we need to update our language when it is inappropriate. Over the past decades, the word “alien” has been used to vilify immigrants and asylum seekers who then become targets of anger and hate crimes. It weaponizes systems, agencies and institutions to express bigotry and hatred without using overtly racist language. Immigrants and refugees arriving in the U.S, often see the United States as their safe haven from war, crime, prosecution or merely are seeking better opportunities and in our state, are currently forced to fit into this divisive and hurtful narrative of being an “alien. In April 2021, President Biden's administration ordered the U.S immigration enforcement agencies to stop using words like “alien” or “illegal alien” to refer to immigrants, recognizing that these words are problematic, dehumanizing and derogatory.

Oregon has been a sanctuary state for over 30 years and in 2021 expanded our sanctuary law to ensure that our immigrant and refugee communities feel safe in Oregon. It is time that Oregon updates this language to reflect its values. Updating our states’ statutory language is just another step to ensure that immigrant and refugee Oregonians are treated with dignity and respect.

I urge you to support this very simple but vitally important policy and change the dehumanizing language that currently exists in our statute.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Isa Peña".

Isa Peña  
Director of Strategy  
Innovation Law Lab