



*Standing for dignity in the workplace*



*Testimony in Support of SB 1543  
February 9, 2022*

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I write in strong support of SB 1543 which would provide immigrant Oregonians with legal support during deportation proceedings. This issues affects our client community deeply and this bill will go a long way in helping immigrants have a fair chance when they face deportation.

The Northwest Workers' Justice Project provides legal representation to low-wage workers throughout the economy in sectors such as construction, building maintenance, landscaping, hotels, restaurants, food processing, agriculture and forestry. All of our clients are low-wage earners. The large majority of our clients are people of color, and most are immigrants.

As an attorney, I know how much of a difference legal representation can make in a person's life. Immigration law is extremely technical and complex- successfully navigating it on one's own is nearly impossible. You need an attorney to have even a decent chance of fighting a deportation. SB 1543 will expand the successful Equity Corps pilot program funded by Multnomah County, the City of Portland, and the State of Oregon to create statewide infrastructure for immigration legal defense. This will level the playing field somewhat so immigrants can make their case as to why they should stay in the country.

NWJP has been involved in various parts of the Oregon Worker Relief Fund, and we fully support the model. We know that immigrant Oregonians have felt safe accessing the fund, since it relies on community organizations that have built trust and respect in immigrant communities. We should replicate this model as we build out state-side legal support in immigration proceedings.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kate Suisman, Attorney at NWJP