

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110
Implementation

Testimony in Support of SB 1560

February 9, 2022

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Senators
Dembrow, Gelser Blouin, Heard, Linthicum, and Manning,

For the record, my name is Natasha Haunsperger and I am
here in my capacity as Chair of the Oregon Commission for
Women.

I am strongly endorsing SB 1560, which proposes the
removal of the term “alien” in Oregon state law and
replacing it with a new term of “non-citizen.” Our state is a
sanctuary state that welcomes immigrants and refugees.
Our state has had a long history of providing that haven
and safe refuge for those fleeing oppressive and corrupt
regimes, failed states, desolate economies, and countries fueled by violence and armed
conflicts.

1. OCFW works toward economic, social, political, and legal equity for the women of Oregon with particular focus on marginalized and underrepresented women of color. We do this through advocacy, public policy research, leadership development, and partnerships.
2. In our statutory role of bringing equity focus and community voice into Oregon policy making, OCFW strongly supports SB 1560.

As if it is not enough of a burden that our immigrants and refugees arrive here with deep and complex and often, untreated traumas, they continue to face and perceive disparities

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Natasha Haunsperger

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and structural power imbalances by being labeled, defined and categorized “as resident aliens.” Language matters, how we define and categorize groups matters because it can, as it does within the current framework, contribute to further isolation, marginalization, and building the public myth and narrative of the “other.” The “other,” that is often perceived as foreign, unknown, and even a threat to the existing order.

I was the other, the resident alien when I immigrated to United States in 2001 from war torn Croatia. My only identification labeled me a resident alien, and while I was, still am, utterly grateful and appreciative of the privilege to be admitted into this country, and given a chance for a new life, I felt the definition ascribed to me, clearly messaged that I was/am different. As a constant reminder that there was a newly ascribed legal identity, I had to embrace.

Based on my personal experience, I want to illuminate that such a label creates additional structural barriers to self-acceptance during an exceptionally burdensome and challenging process of integration and acculturation amidst learning a new language, cultural dynamics, and above all, laws. I applaud Senator Jama’s efforts and advocacy, and following the footsteps of the Biden Administration, which in April 2021 removed such language from the federal lexicon. Our state can and should remove such structural and archaic language of divide across socio-cultural frameworks. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Natasha Haunsperger

Chair of the Oregon Commission for Women

