

SUBJECT: Yes on SB 1543

Chair Prosanski, Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Committee ,

My name is Petrona and I live in Washington County. I am writing in support of SB 1543, Universal Legal Representation, which would provide immigrant Oregonians with legal support during deportation proceedings. Despite a new president and administration, Oregon's immigrants are still very vulnerable to deportation which is why we need accessible, culturally responsive, and community focused legal services.

Many people in removal proceedings have valid legal claims to remain in the country and continue to contribute to Oregon's communities, but no way to articulate these claims without the assistance of counsel. Universal representation safeguards due process by allowing immigrant Oregonians to access the rights afforded to them under existing law.

Representation by an attorney is the single most outcome determinative factor in deportation proceedings. Representation by an attorney improves someone's chances of staying with their family by 457 percent.

Universal Legal Representation expands 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. The program will also prepare Oregon for any major changes in national immigration policy by creating community-led pathways to citizenship. .

Here are some key facts on Universal Legal Representation:

- The program would create a statewide call center that would provide direct contacts and streamline access for those seeking help.
- Impacted communities would be able to choose their provider.
- Community based organizations (CBOs) that already have deep connections to the community would oversee the program's policy and fiscal decisions and have an active role in coordinating.
- The statewide representation team would embed lawyers, through fellowships, at CBOs to ensure community members could turn to the organizations they already know and trust in times of need.

Oregon is home to thousands of immigrants and refugees who live in both cities and towns statewide, and are critical to the state's cultural and economic vitality. Immigrant Oregonians work in key Oregon industries, are essential workers, and own small businesses that contribute to the vibrancy of our communities.

This bill is important to me because I live with a mixed status family. I personally am part of the 11million undocumented community. While I do have DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood

Arrivals) and can feel a sense of security for not being deported, I always feared about one thing- losing family members and not being able to say goodbye to them. Unfortunately, this fear became true. I have lost so many family members over the past years and while they all pained me, it never amounted to the pain I felt when I was not able to even meet or see my grandparents die. It pained me most to see my family hurting because of the unbroken and unjust immigration policies we have. To see our families be continuously torn apart and re-traumatized all because we do not have papers in this country. Despite the fact that we contribute everyday to this economy and abide by this beautiful state we call home. Let alone, through my everyday job, hearing and seeing the pain of my community who has been terrorized by not only ICE but also this countries immigration policies. We are no different! We all deserve the chance to call Oregon home and feel like we belong just as any other born American. As well as have the legal chance to do so by passing this program, which we know would benefit many families like myself who often do not have the funds to seek legal representation because of our financial burdens.

We know that the right legal representation can make a big difference in a person's case! A community member without legal representation is 5.5 times more likely to be deported regardless of the merit of their case. We've already seen this same kind of community focused system in action. By taking the lessons learned from the Oregon Worker Relief Fund model, we can build a similar system that allows our communities of color to connect with the organizations they already know and trust to help them during this difficult time. All Oregonians should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of where they were born. But Oregonians who are immigrants and refugees, especially immigrant Oregonians who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color, have faced increased immigration enforcement that includes racial profiling, detention, family separation, and potential removal to countries where they have fled violence and persecution.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Petrona' written in a cursive, looped style.

Petrona Dominguez Francisco
Washington County