

LISA REYNOLDS, MD
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
District 36



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 10th, 2022

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation,

I am writing today in full support of SB 1543, a bill that would establish a Universal Representation Fund and create a statewide universal representation program to cover costs of immigrations services such as legal representation.

SB 1543 seeks to address the problem many immigrant families face when dealing with deportation - lack of legal representation. Individuals who appear before Immigration Court are not guaranteed legal counsel, and they are [five times](#) more likely to win their case with representation. Indeed, only [37% of all immigrants](#) secure legal representation in their deportation hearings. The ability to hire a private attorney should not bar individuals from being allowed to articulate their cases fairly in court.

In addition to being a state representative, I am also a practicing pediatrician. In my practice, I often help families navigate the immigration system. The positive effect that this bill will have on my patients and their families cannot be overstated.

[A study published in 2020](#) analyzed the effect of punitive immigration policies and showed that the children who had parents deported or who were at risk for deportation experienced emotional trauma. In fact, it increased the likelihood of suicidal idealization by almost 12%. Another case study of adolescents showed that just being aware of anti-immigration policies caused them to exhibit behavioral issues in the classroom, particularly among young men, limiting their engagement with their education. Anecdotally, I have seen the incredible stress and trauma a child experiences when their parent or loved one faces the threat of deportation. Providing these parents with due process in court can make a world of difference in the health of our children and our families.

Immigrants are an essential part of our communities and greatly contribute to our state's wellbeing. We must approach our fractured immigration system with a more compassionate approach. It is well past time for us, as a state, to provide equitable legal representation for all immigrants. **I strongly urge the committee's support of SB 1543.**

Thank you,

Representative Lisa Reynolds, MD