



February 9, 2022

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

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 1543 Universal Representation

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Bonham and Grayber, and Members of the House Business and Labor Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share support for SB 1543 on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). The ACLU of Oregon is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 28,000 members statewide. The ACLU of Oregon supports SB 1543 which would provide accessible, culturally responsive, and community focused legal services.

Immigrants and refugees are a vital part of Oregon's families and communities contributing to Oregon as loved ones, parents, friends, coworkers, community members and leaders, taxpayers, workers, consumers, and entrepreneurs. In fact, one in ten Oregonians is an immigrant or refugee, while one in nine residents is a U.S. citizen who was born in the U.S. with at least one immigrant or refugee parent.

When an immigrant or refugee is forced to participate in deportation proceedings by the federal government without legal counsel, the proceeding becomes fundamentally unfair and unjust. Indeed, there are children as young as three years of age who have been in deportation proceedings without a lawyer to represent them. Without a lawyer, people are 5.5 times likely to get deported than those with a lawyer.

With SB 1543, the Oregon Legislature has the opportunity to establish a state-wide, community-driven program that will provide immigration legal services to those in need. This program is based on a successful multi-year pilot program in Multnomah county. This program will be the first of its kind in the nation with a governance structure made up of community-based organizations; this will allow the program to be connected and responsive to community feedback and needs. Also, this program will support current legal service providers in meeting the need for immigration services by providing funding which will be coordinated by the Oregon State Bar.

Oregon is home to thousands of immigrants and refugees who live in urban and rural areas 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.

We must protect the rights of everyone who calls Oregon home and support their ability to thrive. The ACLU of Oregon urges your support and passage of SB 1543.

Respectfully,

Jessica Maravilla
Policy Director
ACLU of Oregon