February 24, 2023

Re: Yes to HB 2957, Dreamers Belong Act.

Chair, Vice Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Karen Caudillo Roman, I live in Portland, Oregon, and am a community organizer at Adelante Mujeres, a local Latinx women's nonprofit supporting Latinx women and their families. Doing this work brings fulfillment and stability to my life. Thank you for taking the time to review HB 2957

As you all know, the pandemic hit many of our respective communities hard. During this pandemic, many faced financial burdens, COVID worry, and housing concerns like many other Oregonians. Yet, this burden only heightens when I need to start my renewal for my DACA every year and a half. With the uncertainty of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), I start my renewal process six months before the end of my current DACA. This process usually causes me anxiety and sometimes even depression.

Graduating college and becoming the first in my family to have a bachelor's degree would be the most challenging part of having a career with more professional working opportunities for a stable and fruitful life. Yet, my ability to work legally in the country is always in danger as the supreme court decides the future of many of us. We're exhausted. Sadly, with inflation, the cost of housing, and other expenses. I see myself on a tighter budget, and this expense is a financial burden for me. My rent rose 21 percent just in the last year. I'm lucky, though; many folks are under far more burden.

I've heard from peers that they've waited longer than recommended to renew for DACA due to a lack of funds. Many lose their DACA and face uncertainty with employment for months or indefinitely. When I saw the opportunity to testify for HB 2957, I signed up in hopes that the state of Oregon would lift a small amount of burden for many of us living in limbo and stand on the right side of history. I appreciate Rep. Ricki Ruiz for not forgetting the many DACAmented folks in Oregon striving daily to make ends meet—eres un orgullo.

Thank you,

Karen Caudillo Roman