



Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Scharf, Vice-Chair Nguyen, and members of the committee,

My name is Isa Peña and I am the Director of Strategy at Innovation Law Lab. Innovation Law Lab is an Oregon-based non-profit that leverages the power of the legal system, technology, and advocacy to support our state's immigrant and refugee population.

Oregon thrives when all who call this state home are able to participate in society. Over the past several years, Innovation Law Lab has successfully advocated for policies that aim to meet this goal. We have also been working on the ground to ensure that our communities have the coordinated legal services they deserve. Innovation Law Lab appreciates the opportunity to comment on HB 3176 and offer some suggestions on potential language changes.

As drafted, HB 3176 would establish a Welcome and Reception center for immigrants and refugees arriving in Oregon while they get acclimated and set up in Oregon. The Welcome Center would connect these individuals with vital wraparound support services such as shelter, food, health care and legal services, and would allocate funding to nonprofit organizations in this state to provide these services. Innovation Law Lab is excited about the creation of this Welcome and Reception Center - welcoming immigrants and refugees to this country is vital to our mission, and we are eager to support the Center's creation. For the legal services however, the current bill language appropriates funding *outside* of the existing Universal Representation system.

In 2022, the Legislature passed SB 1543, which established the Universal Representation system to provide services to Oregonians in need of various immigration-related matters. Universal Representation is flexible and designed to serve the legal service needs outlined in HB 3176. This program has kept thousands of families together, protected victims of crime, created pathways for self-sufficiency (including work authorization), and enhanced due process rights for all.

Universal Representation is the state of Oregon's system for providing immigration legal services, and we fear that as currently drafted, HB 3176 would create a different, competing system that risks causing confusion for Oregon's immigrant and refugee population. Innovation Law Lab would strongly suggest that language be updated to utilize Oregon's Universal Representation system for the provision of immigration legal services at the Welcome Center. We would also like to see the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement lead the work, in addition to the facilitation and coordination of the services that the Office currently performs.



Innovation Law Lab would be excited to support this bill should this language suggestion be adopted. Thank you for your time and consideration of our suggestion, and we look forward to partnering in further conversations about this important bill.

Sincerely,
Isa Peña
Director of Strategy - Innovation Law Lab