

Chair Prozanski Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the committee

My Name is Brenda Gilmer and I reside in Florence, Oregon. I am a retired lawyer.

I enthusiastically support SB 703/HB 2788, Pathways to Protection and Citizenship. SB 703 allocates money to the Department of Human Services to award grants to nonprofit legal service providers that cover the cost of clients legal services. This is a bill that will save and strengthen families, improve outcomes in ODHS programs, bolster our workforce, and strengthen the general fund by helping immigrants transition from state services like Healthier Oregon to OHP.

Up to 1/3 of Oregonians without an immigration status are actually eligible under federal law for an immigration status. That is over 25,000 Oregonians who, but for the high cost of legal services, are living in fear, out of the employment mainstream, and unable to support their families. Immigrant and refugee communities make up more than 13% of our state's workforce, yet legal costs prevent many Oregonians from obtaining a more secure immigration status.

I support the bill because as a retired lawyer I know the often insurmountable barriers that people without legal representation face in navigating any bureaucratic or legal system. Immigrants and refugees are now under federal attack and need the help this bill offers. Thank you for your time and for standing with all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Brenda Gilmer
Florence, Oregon