



March 20, 2025

Chair Prozanski Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee,

My name is Margarita Gutierrez-Lemus, Executive Director of Familias en Acción (Familias). Familias is a culturally specific organization, whose programs are dedicated to reducing the exclusion of underrepresented and marginalized Latiné communities from economic, health, and social equity. Our mission is to advance Latiné health and wellness through education, supportive services, and programs that uplift community wisdom and strength.

I enthusiastically support SB 703/HB 2788, Pathways to Protection and Citizenship. This bill came before you as HB 4085 in 2024, and passed this Committee unanimously. HB 2788/ SB 703 is a bill that will save and strengthen families, improve outcomes in other DHS programs, bolster our workforce and strengthen Oregon's general fund.

Up to 1/3 of Oregonians without an immigration status are actually eligible under federal law for an immigration status. That is thousands of Oregonians who, but for a few hundred dollars, are living in fear, out of the employment mainstream, 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. This bill's one-time support of Oregonians to offset these legal costs will stabilize our workforce.

The community Familias serves will greatly benefit from the passage of SB 703.

Thank you for your time and for standing with all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Margarita Gutierrez Lemus
Executive Director at Familias en Acción
Familiasenaccion.org