

Submitter: Andrew Fort  
On Behalf Of: SB 703  
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB703

Chair Prozanski Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the committee

My name is Andrew Fort and I am an educator from Portland.

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. As someone who sees firsthand the chaos the threat of immigration causes to children who have no responsibility for their own position, I would be grateful for the opportunity for all children to feel safe and welcomed. Making enemies is not beneficial to our country; making citizens is.

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.

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

Sincerely,

Andrew Fort