



March 21, 2025

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and the other members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing today on behalf of Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN) to express our enthusiastic support for the SB 703/HB 2788, Pathways to Protection and Citizenship. As a reminder, COIN is a network of over 50 grassroots Indivisible groups located in every part of Oregon. We believe in collaboration to protect democracy and support our treasured Oregon values through voter outreach and education, campaigns, and elections. We seek to hold our elected leaders accountable, and advocate for legislation that best reflects our values.

I have the honor of serving as co-chair of COIN's Climate, Energy and Environment (CEE) Team and as a member of COIN's Legislative Team. Prior to my retirement, I taught graduate courses in energy policy and administration for nearly 30 years. Before transitioning to academia, I held senior positions at a major electric utility, a Northwest utility trade association, and the staff of the US Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I normally submit testimony on COIN's behalf on legislation related to energy, climate, and natural resource issues. However, we recently become aware of this important bill and some of us watched the valuable, informed, and heartfelt oral and written testimony presented at your hearing on March 19.

Clearly, SB 703 aligns with COIN's values. We felt it was so important to contribute our collective position in favor of this bill that we achieved permission from the leadership of Oregon's Indivisible groups in record time so I could offer this testimony before the submission deadline.

I will not repeat the excellent points already made by nearly all the people who spoke at the hearing or submitted written testimony. Of course, we were saddened to read the statements of a few uniformed individuals who seem to believe that this bill represents an attempt to "harbor illegals" and threatened to pass the names of those who support this bill to "border czar" Tom Holman. These few voices do not reflect the informed and compassionate Oregon we know and love, and we pleased to see that they were in the extreme minority.

The vast majority of those who testified were informed and thoughtful. They understood that nearly one-third of Oregonians currently without an immigration status are, in fact, 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. As we heard from those who offered informed testimony, immigrant and refugee communities make up more than 13 percent of our state's workforce, yet legal costs prevent many Oregonians from obtaining the more secure immigration status they rightfully deserve.

No doubt, this is why organizations such as the Oregon Farm Bureau, the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, the Oregon Association of Nurseries, the Willamette Valley Vinyards, and others are on record in support of this bill. They understand, based on firsthand knowledge rather than hearsay, how valuable Oregon's immigrant community is to our state's economy.

The individuals I know from the 50 or more grassroots Indivisible groups located throughout the state also appreciate how valuable these immigrants are to their communities and local economies. They are our friends and neighbors. We cringe when we hear that they are afraid to go to work or join us at a local sports event, a church service, or a school field trip. As good neighbors, we want to help them thrive and live the American Dream without fear. Virtually all our ancestors entered the United States as immigrants. Their past struggles have allowed us to live the privileged lives we have today. Now it is our turn to lend a hand to the next generation so that they too can thrive and contribute to a strong, diverse, and vibrant America. SB 703 is an important step in that direction.

Respectfully,

Jeff Hammarlund on behalf COIN as a whole and COIN's Legislative Team