

Submitter: Yuan Zhao
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1516

I am an immigrant and a long-time resident of Eugene in Lane County for over 25 years. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of SB 1516A, particularly the provisions related to pretrial release.

Over the past several years, our community has witnessed repeated waves of organized burglaries targeting Asian American households in Lane County and across Oregon. These crimes are not random. They involve coordinated groups that surveil families, target homes based on perceived ethnicity, and move quickly across jurisdictions. For many in our community, this has deeply shaken our sense of safety.

As immigrants, many of us came to Oregon seeking stability, opportunity, and a safe place to raise our families. When homes are targeted because of who we are, the harm extends beyond property loss. Families begin to feel anxious leaving their homes for work, for school, or even for cultural and community gatherings. Some victims have reported feeling reluctant to speak publicly or report crimes out of concern that nothing meaningful will change.

One of the most discouraging aspects has been seeing defendants released pretrial despite clear indicators of flight risk—only to flee the jurisdiction. When that happens, victims are deprived of the opportunity for justice, and the broader community loses confidence in the system's ability to protect them. Accountability cannot occur if defendants are not present to face trial.

SB 1516A does not eliminate due process or mandate automatic detention. Rather, it restores balanced judicial discretion by allowing judges to consider flight risk and danger to the community in making individualized determinations. In cases involving organized, multi-jurisdictional burglary rings, those risk factors are real and concrete. Judges should have the authority to weigh them appropriately.

Public safety and civil liberties are not opposing values. A fair justice system must protect the rights of defendants while also ensuring that victims and vulnerable communities are not left unprotected. Allowing courts to meaningfully consider flight risk strengthens that balance and helps ensure that the legal process can function as intended.

All Oregonians deserve to feel safe in their homes. I respectfully urge you to support SB 1516A.