



State Senator Kayse Jama

Senate District 24 (D-East Portland)

Native land of Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla, and many other tribes that made their homes along the Columbia and Willamette Rivers

PRESS RELEASE

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Oregon Senate Approves Legislation to Update Outdated Terminology

Senate Bill 1560 will replace “alien” with “noncitizen” in Oregon State Law

SALEM, Oregon - Today the Oregon Senate approved Senate Bill 1560 on a bipartisan vote of 24 to 1. This bill revises existing state law and directs state agencies to refer to individuals who are not citizens or nationals of the United States using “noncitizen” instead of “alien.”

“Referring to immigrants and refugees as ‘aliens’ is an outdated, dehumanizing practice that stems from xenophobia and allows individuals to express bigotry without using overt racist language,” said Senator Kayse Jama, (D-Portland), “As a former refugee, who was once classified as an ‘alien,’ I am proud that Oregon Legislature considers updating its laws to reflect our values. I hope that more states follow.”

“When we hear words like, ‘you don’t belong here’ or ‘go back to where you are from,’ the word ‘alien’ aligns with those views,” said Senator Deb Patterson, (D-Salem), “My children, both people of color, and immigrants themselves, have heard those words. Some of you may have heard those words, too. I am certain that some of our constituents have.”

SB 1560 does not make any substantive change to existing law and will not impact one’s eligibility for federal benefits or programs that are available to a person who meets the definition of “alien” under state or federal law. SB 1560 now moves to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

About State Senator Kayse Jama: Senator Jama represents Senate District 24 (East Portland and North Clackamas) and serves as the chair of the Senate Committee On Housing and Development, and the Legislature’s Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Caucus. He was the first former refugee, Muslim, and Somali-American to serve in the Oregon State Senate. Before his appointment, Sen. Jama was a prominent community organizer and Executive Director of Unite Oregon.