



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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CORRECTION: The State Bar program will work with Oregon's immigration legal services providers and provide fiscal and regulatory oversight of legal services to individuals on immigration and related matters throughout the state.

A previous version of this press release incorrectly stated that the Oregon State Bar would work with three law schools on this program.

House Democrats Enshrine Universal Legal Representation and Due Process in Immigration Proceedings

Senate Bill 1543 begins the process of guaranteeing and funding legal counsel in immigration court proceedings for Oregon residents

SALEM, Ore. - Today Oregon House Democrats approved [Senate Bill 1543 A](#), which will establish the Universal Representation Fund in the State Treasury to provide a statewide, integrated, universal navigation and representation system for immigration matters.

Access to an attorney results in fewer unlawful and unnecessary deportations for immigrants who have a lawful right to be here, destabilizing families and disrupting local economies. Currently, few Oregonians facing immigration court can afford lawyers, and as a result, they are often unable to mount a strong defense, even if they have good legal grounds for remaining in Oregon.

“Unlike in criminal court, immigrants facing deportation and immigration court are not entitled to a lawyer. This will bring Oregonian residents before our immigration courts in equal treatment to those before criminal court systems by granting each person access to legal representation, regardless of their financial resources,” said [Representative Teresa Alonso Leon](#) (D-Woodburn), a co-chief sponsor of the bill whose family came to Oregon from San Jeronimo Purenchecuar, Michoacan, Mexico.

“This is an important bill to limit the damage that deportation inflicts on Oregon families, communities and the state's economy. We will defend Oregon families and give them their chance in court. This is about due process and fairness,” said [Representative Khanh Pham](#) (D-SE/NE Portland), a co-chief sponsor.

Senate Bill 1543 appropriates \$10.5 million to the newly created Universal Representation Fund, and \$4.5 million for the Oregon State Bar's Legal Services Program to provide legal services to individuals on immigration matters. The State Bar program will work with Oregon's immigration legal services providers and provide fiscal and regulatory oversight of legal services to individuals on immigration and related matters throughout the state.

"As a member of the Latinx community, I have seen the struggles and strain that deportation has placed on immigrant and refugee communities across the state," said [Representative Andrea Salinas](#) (D-Lake Oswego), a co-chief sponsor of the bill. "My personal history was at the forefront of my policy-making lens when I worked with several other legislators and organizations to bring this policy forward last session."

"A system in which the amount of money you make or which part of the state you live in makes the difference between whether you are deported or not is not a fair system. That is not due process. That is not the rule of law. And that is not what we believe in as a country, as a state, or as a people," said [Representative Dacia Grayber](#) (D-Tigard). "Today we take a step towards justice."

The Universal Representation Fund is a statewide program that will embed qualified community-based organizations to act as navigators that would guide Oregonians at risk of deportation into the program, supported by a statewide call center. Attorney fellows would be embedded at community-based organizations throughout the state, providing legal services to community members at culturally accessible locations including affirmative services such as DACA renewals, naturalization and legalization services.

The fund will provide client service support to ensure that court-related costs, like filing fees and interpretation, would not be a barrier to accessing representation. Community members will be empowered to choose their legal representative, a choice often denied to those accessing free resources.

SB 1543 passed the House 38-21 and now heads to the Governor's desk for signing.

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