



## OREGON SENATE DEMOCRATS

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Oregon State Legislature

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### **Oregon Senate Democrats Pass Universal Legal Representation**

*Senate Bill 1543 expands access to immigration legal services*

SALEM – Today, the Senate approved [Senate Bill 1543](#) on a vote of 17 to 8. This legislation creates a statewide universal representation program to provide certain immigration services, including legal services, access to community-based navigators and referral coordination.

“Today, immigrant Oregonians with a lawful right to remain in this country are routinely being deported simply because they cannot afford an attorney,” said Senator Kate Lieber (D-Beaverton), Co-Chief Sponsor of Senate Bill 1543, who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “Individuals facing deportation are five and half times more likely to exercise their lawful right to remain if they have that attorney.”

“Without legal representation, immigrants are unfairly disadvantaged during immigration court proceedings,” said Senator Kayse Jama (D-Portland), Co-Chief Sponsor of Senate Bill 1543. “This is a matter of equity and human rights. Everyone deserves due process.”

Unlike in criminal court, immigrants facing deportation in civil immigration court are not guaranteed access to an attorney. Access to an attorney is one of the most important factors into determining whether an immigrant will defeat their unjust deportation. Without an attorney, Oregonians with a lawful right to remain in the United States are routinely deported. Senate Bill 1543 is an expansion of a successful two-year statewide pilot called Equity Corps of Oregon that has protected more than 1,300 Oregonians from an unjust or unfair deportation.

Senate Bill 1543 appropriates \$10.5 million to a newly created Universal Representation Fund to provide a statewide, integrated, universal navigation and representation system for immigration matters, and \$4.5 million for the Oregon State Bar’s Legal Services Program to provide legal services to individuals on immigration matters.

Senate Bill 1543 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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