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**Democrats Pass Bill to Help Convicted Felons Stay in the
Country Illegally**

SALEM, Ore. – Senate Democrats today moved to make taxpayers foot the bill for the deportation lawyers of illegal non-citizens, including those who have also been convicted of felonies like murder, rape, domestic violence, sex abuse, and kidnapping.

“Making victims pay for their abuser to stay in the country illegally is wrong,” Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp (R-Bend). “These kinds of soft-on-crime policies are what is causing Oregonians to feel unsafe in their homes. In the middle of a crime spike, we should be making communities safer, not putting more criminals back on our streets.”

In the Judiciary Committee, a Republican amendment to SB 1543 was rejected that would have ensured those who had stood accused or convicted of felonies would not receive benefits under the universal representation program.

Department of Corrections data shows that as of January 1, 2022, at least 615 individuals with federal ICE detainers are in custody in Oregon prisons. Three-in-five have been convicted of sex abuse, rape, murder, or sodomy. Under SB 1543, these individuals would be prioritized for taxpayer assistance.

It is estimated that taxpayers already pay over \$26 million per year in prison costs to detain criminal illegal non-citizens. SB 1543 appropriates another \$10.5 million to pay for their deportation defense.

The bill passed along party lines, 17-8 and will now be considered by the House.

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