

February 9, 2022

Testimony in Support of SB 1543

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Janet Bauer, Director of Policy Research at the Oregon Center for Public Policy. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of SB 1543 on behalf of the Center.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy is a think tank dedicated to improving the economic outcomes for all Oregonians, particularly low-income families and Oregonians of color, through research and analysis.

HB 1543 would provide Oregonians in immigration court the benefit of a lawyer, which would help ensure that Oregonians are not wrongly removed from their jobs, families, and communities.

Without legal representation, Oregonians typically are unable to mount a strong defense and end up losing their case, even when they have good legal grounds for remaining.

Deportation impacts Oregon's economy. Undocumented immigrants contribute to the economy as workers, business owners, consumers, and taxpayers. No industry is more at risk than Oregon's \$4.5 billion agriculture industry, where undocumented workers make up nearly half of the workforce.

Deportation reduces consumer demand. [Our recent analysis estimates](#) that if the current backlog of deportation cases in Oregon is decided according to long-term trends — with more than half ending in removal — Oregon will have \$130 million fewer dollars circulating per year through fewer purchases of goods and services.

Deportation undermines the financial stability of Oregon households. Currently, there are about 9,000 Oregonians fighting deportation, a circumstance that affects an additional 8,000 family members, including 5,000 children, most of whom are U.S. citizens or legal residents. A deportation proceeding is costly for households. Win or lose a case, family finances plummet by more than a third long after its conclusion, researchers have found.

Children pay a heavy price. One in ten Oregon children live in a household with someone who is undocumented, often a wage-earner. Children who experience a family deportation develop anxiety, depression, and their education suffers. For children, family financial hardship reduces earnings in their adult years, among other damaging effects.

Ensuring legal representation is an investment in Oregon's economy, key industries, workers, and the success of the state's children.

We urge you to support SB 1543.