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February 27, 2019

To: House Committee on Human Services and Housing
RE: HB 2508

Chair Keny-Guyer and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Carla Piluso and I proudly represent House District 50, the great city Gresham.

I am testifying in support of House Bill 2508, which will give refugee resettlement agencies the resources to continue serving refugees in Oregon.

My support for this bill is based on two simple ideas: that when we welcome refugees, we welcome our neighbors. And when we set refugees on the path to success, everyone in our state is better off.

Since 1975, Oregon has resettled over 67,000 refugees. These refugees come from all over the world, whether Ukraine or the Congo. They arrive in Oregon after experiencing unimaginable hardship, spending years or decades in overseas refugee camps, and waiting months to complete security checks before setting foot in our country.

And they make a life here in Oregon, and they become our neighbors. They start businesses, send their kids to school, work alongside us, and even run for office. They enrich our culture and make Oregon a better place. I am so proud to live in a state where we give a warm welcome to newcomers.

Nonprofit refugee resettlement agencies make all of this possible, and they do it on a shoestring budget. We have historically thought of refugee resettlement as a federal issue, but we can no longer depend on the federal government in this area. It's time to take action at the state level, and show that Oregon remains a state that welcomes refugees.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I hope you will join me in support of House Bill 2508.

Sincerely,

Carla C. Piluso
Oregon State Representative, House District 50