

March 18, 2019

To: Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Business and Government  
From: Nathaniel Brown, OBI  
RE: OBI Testimony in Support of SB 855 and SB 856

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**Chair and Members of the Committee:**

On behalf of Oregon Business & Industry's (OBI) membership of more than 1,600 businesses that employ nearly 300,000 people in the state, thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bills 855 and 856. Thank you Senator Dembrow for your leadership on this issue.

OBI members support a welcoming environment for Oregon's newest residents, many of them refugees of war-torn countries or immigrants in search of a better life for their families. SB 855 will direct our state's licensure boards to develop long-needed pathways to licensures, certifications or other authorizations so our refugees and immigrants can practice professions that our workforce and communities depend on, and for which they are eminently qualified to practice. SB 856 establishes an Oregon Office of New Americans. These are inherently economic and workforce issues, important to the statewide business community.

According to a 2017 Migration Policy Institute (MPI) study, "The Costs of Brain Waste among Highly Skilled Immigrants in Oregon," immigrants often cannot maximize their academic and professional qualifications here in our state due to difficulties transferring their credentials from their home countries. According to the researchers at MPI, Oregon was home to 55,000 highly skilled immigrants who had obtained at least a bachelor's degree during the 2009-2013 period. Of this group, 27 percent (or 15,000 people) were either unemployed or underemployed in low-skill jobs. Low-skilled employment resulted in immigrant college graduates in Oregon forgoing approximately to \$272.5 million in annual earnings and as a result, the state experienced \$27.7 million in forgone state and local tax revenue.

Additionally, unemployed or under-employed workers have lower disposable incomes to spend and invest in our state's economy. Indeed, with the dynamic workforce needs in this state, employers are also forced to miss opportunities to hire skilled workers with the specific qualifications they need.

We support SB 855 and 856 because they direct licensure boards to develop their own plans within a certain time period. Considering the massive costs to our state due to our lack of efficient recredentialing pathways, the immediacy of these bills is appreciated as well. We support these bills because they promote the recognition of foreign credentials, make licensing requirements more transparent and establish the new Oregon Office of New Americans, all of which will be enormously beneficial to our state economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.

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