



## World Education Services Statement on SB 778

World Education Services (WES) supports establishing a statewide office to promote inclusion and equitable access to programs and services for immigrants and refugees living in Oregon. WES believes SB 778 is a step toward achieving this goal.

WES is a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to helping immigrants, refugees, and international students achieve their educational and career goals in the United States and Canada. WES evaluates international educational qualifications, supports the integration of immigrants and refugees into the workforce, and provides philanthropic funding to immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations.

Together with New American Economy (NAE), WES convenes the Office of New Americans (ONA) network. The ONA network provides a forum for state policy leaders across the U.S. to drive transformative policies and programs to ensure immigrants and refugees are welcomed in their communities and have meaningful access to programs and services.

The need is clear. More than 430,000 immigrants and refugees call Oregon home. According to the Migration Policy Institute, 55,000 newcomers in Oregon have at least a bachelor's degree and 27 percent are either under- or unemployed—resulting in approximately \$272.5 million in foregone annual earnings and \$27.7 million in foregone state and local tax revenue. A statewide office tasked with ensuring access to workforce development support and economic opportunities for immigrants and refugees will help to address this urgent need. WES hopes the new office will provide services to increase opportunities for newcomers to fully participate in Oregon's economy.

Oregon should follow several other states that have established similar offices by creating an advisory board that includes immigrant- and refugee- led organizations, educational institutions, health organizations, workforce development organizations, and other community-based organizations with a proven track record of serving immigrants and refugees. The effective engagement of these community stakeholders in the design and implementation of their state's office is essential to building inclusive communities. With an advisory board, the new office can collaborate with community members, identify areas for policy reform, and, ultimately, improve services for immigrants and refugees.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit a statement of support.

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