

Subject: Written Testimony in Support of SB778

Thank you for allowing us to present our written testimony in support of SB778.

Over 400,000 refugee and immigrant Oregonians have needs which are not being addressed because the State currently lacks the means of determining and building on those communities' inherent abilities and capacities. SB778 will give Oregon the people, tools, and methods for assessing and implementing strategies to best serve this important population.

Our state government serves best when it listens to our diverse communities and addresses the issues and priorities as determined by them. By creating the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement (OIRA), specific programs and policies can be created, geared, and targeted to address and overcome recognized obstacles to the communities' success. Working in partnership and providing the capacity and tools will, in turn, strengthen all of Oregon's families and communities.

We are asking you to seize this opportunity created by SB 778 to provide our refugee and immigrant communities a platform by which they can build on their natural abilities for the betterment of themselves and all Oregonians.

Thank you,

Tom Potter, Mayor of Portland (ret.)

Karin Hansen, Educator and Community Activist