

Dear Senators,

Thank you for your time. My name is An Bui and I work as a Data Specialist for the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, or IRCO, here in Portland and I am here to advocate for SB 778.

I believe that this past year has really shown both the tremendous impact that nonprofits and grassroots efforts can have during times of crisis, but also, it highlighted their limits. At IRCO, we made, and continue to make, a tremendous impact on our communities in these times of need. But it is my opinion that IRCO's successes, and the successes of other nonprofit organizations like IRCO, came in spite of the current system, and not because of it. Our successes are a result of the community's ingenuity and tireless dedication, and the bountiful humanity of Oregonians. But I don't think that'll be enough. I don't think it's sustainable.

I am one of only a handful of people working on data at IRCO - an agency with over 200 programs. This is not uncommon at all in the nonprofit sector, and in fact it's probably the norm. Rather than collecting and reporting community needs, much of the work we data people do is collecting data for grant reporting. These reporting requirements, and the services being reported, are usually defined by the funders- of which there are over a hundred- and can sometimes reflect their own priorities and needs rather than that of the community. And while we, the people on the ground working to serve the community, may anecdotally know what is needed- what's working, what's not working, and what can work- it is not backed by data or research, nor the funds, which are often short term, can arbitrarily come and go, leaving needs unmet and the work half-finished. This is not a sustainable way to provide social services - it is wasteful and duplicative for us, for the funders, and for the community.

We can do better. At IRCO, the work we do is important, and it is extensive. Every day I have the privilege to see those with lived experience as immigrants and refugees helping other immigrants and refugees. We (and by that, I mean the community) are the experts, and funding should respond to community expertise, not the other way around, as it currently does. I believe creating an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement will go a long way toward deepening the impact of existing funding, while providing the infrastructure to meet the urgent demands of today and of the future.

Part of that infrastructure too is a moral and cultural foundation that can guide our responses to the ever-deepening crisis we face. What we are facing now, and what we will continue to face in the future, is not a crisis of immigration, it is not a crisis of refugees but a crisis of global displacement; displacement by climate change, caused

primarily by us and other developed countries, and displacement by unfair trade policies championed by our own government that dispossess and displaces people around the world from their lands and livelihoods.

In a 2018 report, the World Bank projects that by 2050, as high as one billion people will be displaced by climate change globally. The total number of migrants worldwide has reached 272 million, 3.5 percent of the world's population, of which 70.8 million are forcibly displaced people. Of these 70 million, 95 percent remain internally displaced or in refugee camps in neighboring countries. Over half of those living in refugee camps around the world are children under the age of eighteen, and less than 1 percent of refugees living in camps around the world find a permanent home. Meanwhile, the U.S. accepts less than one percent of the world's displaced population.

Ignoring this crisis is not an option. And in truth, we have not ignored it. In fact, as with all crises, we have met it with the ideas that were lying around: but unfortunately, those ideas are rooted in 400 years of racism, xenophobia, and white supremacy. This is undeniable. As the crisis deepens, will we continue down this costly trend of violence, exclusion and xenophobia? Of criminalizing, imprisoning, and deporting people who are fleeing danger, or can we model something different? Can we build a path based on the values of compassion, accountability, care, and respect that all of us hold dear? And who better to meet the needs of those migrants and refugees in need, than people who have been migrants and refugees themselves.

There are consequences to how we view and treat the most vulnerable in our society, in this case migrants and refugees. Mostly, those consequences are paid for by the migrants and refugees themselves, as was evident two weeks ago in Georgia, or two years ago in a Walmart in El Paso, Texas. But there is a consequence to the rest of the population as well. A The capitol insurrection shows the damage that white nationalism can do to our democracy. This growing white nationalist threat can only exist in opposition to a dehumanized and menacing 'other'. Those dehumanizing ideas continue to animate our imagination because we in fact dehumanize the 'other' - through the ways in which we exclude, criminalize, incarcerate, and deport 'this other'. So we all have something at stake here, not just the immigrant and refugee communities. And turning the tide requires a collective effort, from all of us, based on the values that we all share. SB 778 can be the first step down that new path, and I hope it gets passed.

Thank you,

An Bui