

Greetings Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation,

Catholic Charities of Oregon has been serving migrants in our state since the 1940s. We are one of three non-profits that resettle refugees in the state as well as one of six non-profits that offer low- and pro-bono immigration legal services to the newest Oregonians. Additionally, we are a provider of culturally and linguistically responsive mental health and food security programs, offering services in Spanish, English, Somali, Swahili, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Burmese, Zomi, Karen, Kachin, Hmong, Rohingya, Arabic, Russian and French.

Our board of directors and our staff reflect the diverse and multi-cultural reality of the communities we serve and we strive to meet our mission of partnering with the most vulnerable, across all faiths and identities, to achieve lasting solutions to poverty and injustice. Catholic Charities of Oregon supports the establishment of a statewide office to promote inclusion and equitable access to programs and services for immigrants and refugees living in Oregon.

The Oregon Refugee Resettlement Agencies (Catholic Charities, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and Lutheran Community Services Northwest) are part of a much larger national network of organizations designated by the federal government to resettle refugees from around the globe. As such, these organizations are the very first to welcome the newest Oregonians, and to provide the first essential steps to integration for newly arriving families. As such, we greatly understand the benefits that having a more coordinated and cohesive approach to serving refugees will have at the state level. In collaboration with our international, federal and national partners, the state of Oregon can work to address the very real need for equitable funding and resource distribution to refugee and other migrant communities. We are excited to witness Oregon recognize, engage and invest in the many refugee-led organizations and groups within the state while aligning with and supporting the efforts of the decades-long established Refugee Resettlement service ecosystem.

Catholic Charities of Oregon requests that the committee pass SB 778 to support refugee and migrant leaders and promote racial equity in Oregon. We are excited work alongside the state to match state and national efforts and we look forward to partnering around welcoming refugees for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Deacon Richard Birkel, PhD
Executive Director
Catholic Charities of Oregon