



## World Education Services Statement of Support for SB 849

World Education Services (WES) supports **SB 849**, which would expand pathways to practice for international medical graduates (IMGs) and increase workforce assistance programs to support eligible internationally educated Oregonians seeking to enter the state's workforce.

WES is a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to helping international students, immigrants, and refugees achieve their educational and career goals in the United States and Canada. For more than 45 years, WES has set the standard of excellence in the field of international academic credential evaluation. Through WES Global Talent Bridge, the organization joins with institutional partners, community-based organizations, and policymakers to help immigrants and refugees who hold international credentials fully utilize their talents and education to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through its grantmaking, impact investing, and partnerships, the WES Mariam Assefa Fund seeks to advance economic and social inclusion for immigrants and refugees.

Oregon is home to a significant immigrant population; more than 400,000 Oregonians—one in ten of the state's residents—were born in another country.<sup>1</sup> Immigrant workers make up 13 percent of Oregon's workforce,<sup>2</sup> including 22 percent of the state's physicians.<sup>3</sup> As of 2017, 55,000 immigrants living in Oregon held at least a bachelor's degree; 15,000 were either unemployed or unable to get work that was commensurate with their experience.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Immigrants in Oregon" American Immigration Council, August 6, 2020.  
<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-oregon>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Batalova, Jeanne and Michael Fix "Leveraging the Skills of Immigrant Health-Care Professionals in Illinois and Chicago," Migration Policy Institute, April 2022.  
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-health-professionals-illinois>.

<sup>4</sup> Soto, Ariel, Jeanne Batalova, and Michael Fix "The Costs of Brain Waste among Highly Skilled Immigrants in Oregon," Migration Policy Institute (MPI), June 2017.  
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/costs-brain-waste-among-highly-skilled-immigrants-select-states#:~:text=The%20Costs%20of%20Brain%20Waste%20in%20Oregon&text=As%20a%20result%20of%20this%20skill%20underutilization%2C%20they%20did%20not,state%20and%20local%20tax%20revenue>.



At the same time, Oregon also faces critical shortages in its health care workforce. As recently as December 2022, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) designated 14 of Oregon’s 36 counties as Health Professional Shortage Areas; that is, there were not enough primary care workers in those counties.<sup>5</sup> Immigrants and refugees with backgrounds in health care are well-positioned to help address these shortages, offering in-demand skills, multilingual abilities, and cultural competence. Studies have found that patients generally improve when medical care providers are diverse.<sup>6</sup> Through diversifying the healthcare workforce, providers may be better equipped to care for diverse populations.

If enacted, SB 849 would help to ensure that internationally trained immigrants and refugees could join Oregon’s health workforce. First, the bill would create a limited license that would authorize eligible IMGs to practice medicine under the supervision of a fully licensed physician. This limited license could be renewed indefinitely, effectively allowing IMGs to resume their professions while addressing the state’s health care shortage.

Second, SB 849 would establish the Internationally Educated Workforce Reentry Grant Program to provide financial assistance to eligible non-profit organizations, post-secondary educational institutions, and industry-specific employers who work to support internationally trained workers. Through these grants, organizations would be able to provide career guidance and support to internationally trained workers in five specific professions, including nursing, medicine, and teaching.

A study produced by the Nonprofit Association of Oregon, Portland State University’s Nonprofit Institute, Mercy Corps Northwest, and Oregon Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster in 2020 shows that 56 percent of the 490 surveyed non-profit leaders in Oregon have concerns that their organizations will not be able to maintain their level of service;<sup>7</sup> 54

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<sup>5</sup> “Designated Health Professional Shortage Areas Statistics: First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2023 Designated HPSA Quarterly Summary.” Bureau of Health Workforce, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, As of December 31, 2022.

<https://data.hrsa.gov/Default/GenerateHPSAQuarterlyReport>.

<sup>6</sup> Otte, Sonia V. “Improved Patient Experience and Outcomes: Is Patient–Provider Concordance the Key?” *Journal of Patient Experience*. 2022;9. doi:[10.1177/23743735221103033](https://doi.org/10.1177/23743735221103033)

<sup>7</sup> “Nonprofits at “Breaking Point,”” *Oregon Business*, August 10, 2020.

<https://www.oregonbusiness.com/article/economy/item/19131-nonprofits-at-breaking-point>



percent reported losses in earned income, with 35 percent losing more than 50 percent of their earned income as a result of the economic strain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>8</sup>

With the Internationally Educated Workforce Reentry Grant Program, organizations serving internationally trained immigrants can strengthen their programs and services to foster a comprehensive system that would help immigrants resume their careers in Oregon.

Third, SB 849 would update testing requirements by waiving the English proficiency test for applicants who already met an English proficiency requirement in another state and removing the existing seven-year time limit for completing the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE). Currently, 12 states have no set time limit for completing the USMLE, an approach Oregon might also consider.

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

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.