

**IMMIGRANT
AND REFUGEE
COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATION**

building new beginnings
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**MAIN OFFICE
AFRICA HOUSE
ASIAN FAMILY CENTER
INTERNATIONAL
LANGUAGE BANK**

Dear Co-Chairs Campos, Valderama, and members of the Joint Subcommittee on Human Services,

The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) would like to show our strong support for the Tax Infrastructure Grant Program under Oregon Department of Human Services' Self Sufficiency Programs. This program, which launched in 2022, ensures low-income Oregonians, especially historically underserved populations like immigrants and refugees, have access to free tax support to complete and submit successful returns.

IRCO is one of the only providers of culturally specific tax preparation services who can meet the needs of the diverse range of communities we serve. Historically we have faced numerous challenges in helping our communities file taxes – particularly because of insufficient funding to support the work. The Tax Infrastructure Grant Program provided necessary funding to launch IRCO's pilot program in the Portland area to provide tax assistance/completion services to immigrant and refugee communities, and we anticipate serving 200 clients in the 2023 tax season. Many of the families we serve live in poverty and lack language and navigation skills to access limited resources that are offered. These resources gave us the capacity for culturally and linguistically specific outreach and free tax preparation services. These are communities who may otherwise be unserved without the culturally specific services that IRCO provides.

Ongoing funding in the 2023/2025 biennium is vital for IRCO to continue these services. There are no city, county or federal funds supporting this work. If Oregon Department of Human Services does not continue the funding through this innovative HB 5026, we will be forced to close down our services.

Should this funding be sustained, we can expand and open remote or hybrid remote and in person sites in other locations like our culturally specific hubs and in Eastern Oregon at our Ontario offices, where there is significant need for culturally specific services. Sustained funding will allow us to develop training materials for future years, working together with our partners and bringing our expertise to adapt and enhance their training via culturally specific models to expand strengthen the network of culturally specific free tax providers. Furthermore, it will give us matching fund capacity to apply for federal funding like VITA grant funding to provide these essential services to Oregon residents who otherwise would not be filing successfully.

This is why we urge your yes vote on HB 5026. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Po Cha', is written over a white rectangular background.

Lee Po Cha
Executive Director