



IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

BUILDING NEW BEGINNINGS

10301 NE Glisan Street

Portland, Oregon 97220

www.irco.org

MAIN OFFICE

AFRICA HOUSE

EASTERN OREGON

GREATER MIDDLE EAST
CENTER

PACIFIC ISLANDER &
ASIAN FAMILY CENTER

SLAVIC AND EASTERN
EUROPEAN CENTER

April 8th, 2023

Re: SB 5506

Chair Sanchez, Chair Steiner, and, Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The committee must support the passage of a budget that includes bills and investments for culturally specific and community-based initiatives.

The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) is a statewide culturally responsive non-profit that provides an array of direct services and capacity-building resources for Oregon's immigrant and refugee populations. Our organization and communities of interest are culturally, racially, ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse.

Many of our immigrant, migrant, and refugee communities left or fled regions where civic participation is undermined by corruption, and autocracy, and is sometimes punishable by state violence.

These folks are notably absent from Oregon's civic spaces, ignored by State institutions, and are not centered in this legislative budget process.

Remember, under Governor Kate Brown's leadership, legislators made landmark investments in Black, Indigenous, and communities of color before and during covid. Long-term promises like Student Success Act programs, the Early Childhood Equity Fund, Universal Representation, the Welcome Refugee Bill, Oregon Cares and Worker's Relief Funds to name a few.

These initiatives are part of the State's robust promises to support and build equitable relationships between the State's government and marginalized communities.

Let us not backstep. I have heard from some legislators not to include terms like equity, and racial justice in bills and advocacy efforts, or be too specific about which groups might be served. Let us not give into a culture of fear in which language is sanitized, and where a scarcity mentality prevails.

From the outside, the Ways and Means Committee is a black box to our communities. Give us your list of what you want to cut, and tell us: are BIPOC communities, LGBTQ2SIA+ folk, people with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers on this list?

Ask yourself who will stay in their homes or remain homeless at the end of this session, which children will succeed, who stays incarcerated and



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who reintegrates, who can receive federal benefits, and who survives hate crimes.

Consider this, you are representing an intersectional community whether you consider them your constituents, whether they are denied voting rights, or not.

This year, we seek investments in BIPOC communities in housing, health, education, voting rights, workforce development, childcare, refugee resettlement, wrap-around and legal services for migrants and asylum seekers, food access for all, data justice, disability justice, and racial equity.

I thank you for your support of our BIPOC, immigrant, refugee, and migrant communities in the State of Oregon and for the opportunity to address this body.

Alex Riedlinger

Policy Advocacy Coordinator

Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization