

HB 4159 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services

Prepared By: Matthew Perreault, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/5

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure directs the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement (OIRA) to coordinate the provision of support services to individuals who are recent arrivals to Oregon and the United States and who are not already receiving such services through the federal refugee resettlement program. The measure requires OIRA to perform annual performance audits of contracted entities to evaluate compliance and financial effectiveness. The measure also establishes an advisory council to facilitate communication and make recommendations regarding the program. The measure declares an emergency and is effective on passage.

Detailed Summary:

Support Services for Eligible Newcomers (Sections 1 and 2)

- Defines “eligible newcomer” as an individual, or their minor child, who is not a U.S. citizen, is not receiving support services under an eligible immigration status designated by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, and has been in the United States for 24 months or less and in Oregon for 18 months or less.
- Directs the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement (OIRA), in consultation with the Department of Human Services, to coordinate with community-based organizations and award contracts to entities to equitably provide specified support services to eligible newcomers.
- Specifies that services include intake and case management, short-term wraparound services for meeting basic needs, and long-term support services such as education and employment.
- Prescribes the scope of services to be provided and the provisions of contracts to be awarded to participating entities.
- Requires that contracts be awarded on a competitive basis and that participating entities must conduct surveys of the individuals served for continuous improvement.
- Requires OIRA to perform annual performance audits of contracted entities to evaluate compliance and financial effectiveness.

Advisory Council (Section 3)

- Establishes an advisory council whose purpose is to serve as a central forum for discussion, communication, and policy recommendations on the above program and review the surveys and audits of contracted entities.
- Provides that the council be composed of seven to 11 volunteer members, representing specified contracted entities, community-based organizations, and state and local government, who will be appointed by the OIRA director.

Effective Date (Section 4)

- Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 The amendment adds an appropriation of \$5 million General Fund to the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement for the current biennium to administer the program.

BACKGROUND:

The Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement (OIRA) is charged with advocating for the interests of immigrants and refugees, collecting and monitoring data on immigrant and refugee populations in Oregon, and advocating for and analyzing policy proposals that affect immigrants and refugees. OIRA was established in 2021 by [Senate Bill 778](#). [Senate Bill 1550 \(2022\)](#) transferred OIRA from the Office of the Governor to the Department of Human Services (DHS). Before OIRA was established, the Legislative Assembly enacted [House Bill 2508](#) in 2019 (codified as ORS 411.139), which directed DHS to award grants to certain organizations to provide various navigation and assistance services for refugees.

Starting in 2022, DHS established the [Welcome Center](#) at a former hotel near Portland International Airport to provide temporary food and shelter, case management, and various support services to approximately 300 individuals and families who had recently arrived in Oregon through the U.S. southern border. The Welcome Center was operated under contract by a private provider and served individuals and families from 19 different countries, according to a [DHS report](#). As directed by Section 115 of [Senate Bill 5006 \(2023\)](#), DHS closed the Welcome Center at the end of 2023 and partnered with Multnomah County to transition the individuals it served into community-based housing and wrap-around services.

House Bill 4159 directs OIRA to coordinate the provision of support services to individuals who are recent arrivals to Oregon and the United States and establishes an advisory council to facilitate communication and make recommendations regarding the program.