



From The Office of Representative Hoa Nguyen
Subject: Support for HB 4159.

February 5, 2024

Good morning Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Scharf, and Members of HCECHS

My name is Representative Hoa Nguyen and I represent House District 48. Within the rich tapestry of human narratives, my own story is intricately woven with threads of resilience, hope, and the unyielding spirit of individuals who have sought refuge in the face of adversity. My origins are deeply rooted in a tale of displacement during the Vietnam War—a story that not only illuminates the challenges endured by those compelled to abandon their homes but also underscores the extraordinary strength that emerges from such trials. The echoes of my family's history resonate with the enduring struggles faced by numerous migrants today—marked by the quest for sanctuary, the endeavor to rebuild lives amidst uncertainty, and the commitment to carry the torch of resilience across generations. For these reasons, I am proud to champion HB 4159 - the Newcomers Humanitarian Investment Pilot Program.

A lot of people have asked about the Welcome Center when discussing this bill. First and foremost, we want to thank the property management company, Fortify Holdings, for helping us provide housing in times of crisis. I also want to thank them for continuing to build their relationship with the State and the community through the development of this bill. The Welcome Center was established as an initial humanitarian response and now that it has been closed, there is a need for a long-term, sustainable, and cost effective way to continue serving families arriving in Oregon in need. In this policy, a new term, Newcomers, will be introduced. We are describing a **newcomer** as someone who has migrated to the United States in the last two years, and has recently resettled in Oregon and is experiencing houselessness and needs access to centralized services. They may have been forced to flee because of violence and turmoil or are seeking safety, protection and a better life for their loved ones.

LC 95 seeks to create a pilot program to provide immediate support services to newcomers arriving in Oregon with little to no resources. The Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement **in consultation with Oregon Department of Human Services**, shall coordinate and contract with community based organization to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate support services including:

- Streamlined intake, initial reception and case management.
- Short-term wraparound support including shelter, food, clothing, health care and transportation.
- Long-term support related to housing, education, employment, leadership development and technology.

HB 4159 also creates an advisory committee to serve as a forum for sharing information and provide feedback to the office and organizations contracted to provide services based on annual audits and surveys. By creating a robust infrastructure to welcome newcomers, we would be prepared for an influx rather than be reactive to large flows of migration.

This Newcomer Humanitarian investment of 5 million dollars will allow recently arrived individuals and their families to have access to housing, and other basic necessities. The bill also can **serve as a way to sustain and improve existing infrastructures through the cost effective way** of utilizing existing resources rather than supplanting them with an additional structure. A key element of this bill is reliance on **accessing existing services** such as the Healthier Oregon Program, migrant education, food, and rent and utilities assistance programs in order to supplement what the bill can monetarily provide.

It is my hope that through this pilot program, Oregon will position itself to be ready to receive federal funding if the federal government chooses to intervene and support newcomers. We see this legislative concept as a way to build up Oregon's workforce and allow our newest Oregonians to integrate in our state and contribute to our collective success. I want to also note that Community Based Organizations are already doing this work and have been doing it for years. However, now they are looking to the state to intervene as resources and support services are severely limited.

Please join me in supporting this legislative proposal, as we assist newcomers in understanding the nuances of our system and the resiliency that forms through shared challenges. Failing to invest at this moment means forfeiting the chance to embrace and assist the latest immigrant families in Oregon, as well as avoiding the escalation of Oregon's expanding homeless population.

The **absence of funding and federal infrastructure** is creating additional hardships for people seeking asylum and is **forcing states to be creative and develop their own solutions**. We see this pilot as a way to **build up Oregon's workforce** and allow our newest Oregonians to integrate in our state and contribute to our collective success.

My colleagues and many of the community based organizations listed in the presentation have worked tirelessly over the years to get this in front of the legislative body and will share more in the following presentation.