



Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization

10301 NE Glisan Street, Portland, OR 97220

www.irco.org

February 5, 2024

Chair Neron, Vice-chair Hudson, Vice-Chair Wright, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (“IRCO”), I express our enthusiastic support for HB 4082, the Summer Learning Grant Program. The positive impact of summer learning, particularly for newcomer, English Language Learners, is significant and transformative.

We firmly believe that the Summer Learning Program presents a critical opportunity. Additional funding for community-based organizations (“CBO’s”) like IRCO will not only help us expand our capacity to serve historically and currently underserved families but also enable us to continue developing culturally relevant programs where we foster academic engagement.

As an organization founded by and led by refugees and immigrants, we know firsthand the challenges our families face. They have long been overlooked by our public education system, and their barriers in school have only intensified. These communities are disproportionately navigating poverty, have limited English, living in under-resourced rural communities, and due to the experience of migration and displacement experienced high incidences of trauma, illness, and disability. School represents an important connection for the families we serve, and culturally specific summer learning can play a vital role in addressing these disparities during summer break. This bill if passed would provide summer programming that would allow children to make up for learning loss, to arrive at school ready to learn in the new year and cultivate connections and a sense of belonging/community within their school and studies.

IRCO has previously benefitted from state funded summer learning funds, helping us to bridge gaps in engagement and instruction and provide crucial support to underserved youth and their families in partnerships with school districts. This work and these partnerships may not happen in the future if funding is not available. This is an equity gap and particularly concerning considering our youth who are at risk of gang/gun violence.

IRCO wholeheartedly encourages your support for HB 4082. By supporting this legislation, you will contribute to the well-being and success of immigrant and refugee youth, helping bridge existing gaps and create a more equitable education system.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and we urge your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lee Po Cha", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Lee Po Cha,

IRCO Executive Director