



Statement of the Refugee Advocacy Lab in Support of H.B. 4085

February 7, 2024

Dear Chair Reynolds and Members of the Committee,

We are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.B. 4085. The vast majority of foreign-born Oregonians have naturalized since immigrating to the United States, embracing the privileges of citizenship and [contributing](#)¹ to Oregon's social and economic vibrancy. However, tens of thousands of Oregonians, including 108,000 long-time residents, still lack immigration documentation and/or permanent status due to the high cost of fees and legal services in the state.

Having permanent status or U.S. citizenship allows new Oregonians access to better paying jobs, critical services, and opportunities to thrive and contribute in ways that are limited otherwise, a loss to the state and the economy. Pathways to permanent status are expensive and complex to navigate for individuals who are not familiar with immigration law. The overwhelming nature of this process leaves many families in limbo unless they obtain legal and financial assistance. Application fees for immigration filings can easily surpass thousands of dollars for families, posing a barrier to obtaining status or U.S. citizenship. House Bill 4085 directs Oregon's Department of Human Services (ODHS) to provide grants, based on income level, that cover the legal fees that non-citizen Oregonians may incur as they navigate the process of applying for permanent protection.

We urge you to support H.B. 4085, enabling a pathway for Oregonians to enjoy the stability that comes with permanent status and U.S. citizenship.

About the Refugee Advocacy Lab

The Refugee Advocacy Lab is an initiative hosted at Refugees International and co-founded with the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Refugee Congress. The Lab's mission is to grow the movement for U.S. leadership on refugee protection and inclusion. Centered in the perspective and leadership of displaced people themselves, we support the advocacy community by developing strategic communications resources, championing inclusive policies, and building capacity for the field.

¹ American Immigration Council, "Immigrants in Oregon," (2023).