

Written Testimony in Support of HB 4085

As Director of Ariana House, a non-profit that has been providing transitional housing and other supports to asylum seekers and refugees since 2015, I have seen first-hand the struggle families and individuals face to pay their legal and agency fees to receive immigration benefits that would help them to support their families and to integrate their lives into our Oregon communities.

The number one desire of all of the more than 120 individuals we have served is to find employment. For asylum-seekers, it is particularly frustrating to be allowed entry into the US, but then have no legal way to support one's life once here. Asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable because they are eligible for so few sources of funding. Many end up delaying applying for asylum and, therefore delaying their work authorization simply because they cannot pay legal fees and existing free legal services do not have the capacity to serve them. Additionally, individuals who enter with Humanitarian Parole often also do not have the funds to pay both the USCIS fee of \$410 for Work Authorization or the attending legal fees for assistance to apply. This also holds true for people eligible for TPS.

Providing grants to immigrants to pay fees would allow these new Oregonians to legally work within months of their arrival here and to receive a Social Security card. The Work Permit and Social Security card not only allows them to work safely and to support themselves and their families, but it also allows them to secure stable housing and to integrate into our communities.

Thank you for your time.