

SB 149 -3 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Judiciary

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Meeting Dates: 4/7, 4/8

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

This measure directs the Department of Human Services to study immigration.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-3 This amendment replaces the measure, makes technical changes, and modifies two definitions under ORS 411.139, pursuant to which the Department of Human Services (DHS) awards contracts to eligible entities to assist refugees. First, the amendment expands the definition of eligible entities to include culturally responsible or specific organizations serving diverse populations and communities. Second, the amendment expands the definition of refugees to include individuals pursuing immigration assistance, not receiving support services via the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, and having resided in Oregon for 24 months or less. The amendment clarifies that individuals seeking formal refugee status or having former refugee status are eligible for assistance and that entities who previously contracted with the U.S. Department of State are eligible for DHS contracts.

BACKGROUND:

“Refugees are individuals or groups of people in grave danger because their home government is unwilling or unable to protect them or may be actively persecuting them. . . . When people flee their own countries, they are interviewed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to decide if they meet refugee requirements. . . . Each year, the U.S. government allows a certain number of refugees to come to the U.S. to begin a new life.” Oregon Department of Human Services. *Refugee and Eligible Immigration Status*, <https://www.oregon.gov/odhs/refugees/Pages/definitions.aspx>

In 2019, the Legislative Assembly enacted House Bill 2508, appropriating \$4.5 million to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to award grants to supplement federal funds and mitigate against a reduction in support for refugee resettlement. SB 2508 significantly increased the duration of support services from 9 to 24 months and specifically invested in culturally responsive employment services.