

**February 27, 2025**

**Senate Committee on Health Care**

**Oregon State Legislature**

**Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee,**

My name is Olena Bilyk, and I serve as the Activity Coordinator at the IRCO Slavic and Eastern European Center. Our organization is dedicated to supporting refugees and immigrants, particularly those who have recently arrived from Ukraine. Since the onset of the conflict in February 2022, approximately 4,500 Ukrainians have sought refuge in Oregon, fleeing the turmoil and devastation in their homeland.

These individuals bring with them a wealth of professional experience and advanced education. Many were esteemed professionals in Ukraine and Europe—doctors, nurses, engineers, and educators—whose careers were abruptly halted by the war. In our center alone, we have engaged with around 45 active members who hold higher education degrees and possess substantial practical experience.

Despite their qualifications, these refugees face significant challenges in obtaining accreditation and licensure in Oregon. The complex and often prohibitive recertification processes not only hinder their ability to contribute meaningfully to our state's workforce but also exacerbate feelings of displacement and frustration.

Senate Bill 476 offers a beacon of hope for these professionals. By providing grants to not-for-profit organizations, post-secondary institutions, and employers, this bill aims to deliver career guidance and support services tailored to immigrant and refugee workers. This includes industry-specific English education, relevant computer skills training, and resources for trauma-informed care.

The passage of SB 476 would not only empower these individuals to reclaim their professional identities but also enrich Oregon's communities with their diverse skills and perspectives. It's an investment in a more inclusive, equitable, and robust workforce that reflects the rich tapestry of our state's population.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 476 and, in doing so, affirm Oregon's commitment to embracing and uplifting those who seek refuge and a fresh start within our borders.

**Sincerely,**

**Olena Bilyk**

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