



March 6, 2025

RE: HB 3669 – Oregon Prosperity Program

Dear Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of committee:

Since 1976, the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization ("IRCO") has supported our immigrant and refugee communities in achieving self-sufficiency and overcome the barriers to build meaningful lives in Oregon and across our region. Today, through IRCO's mission to welcome, serve, and empower refugees, immigrants, and people across cultures and generations to reach their full potential—we recognize the positive impact of HB 3669 Prosperity 10,000 programs if passed for our communities, Oregon's workforce, and Oregonians all together.

IRCO in the past biennium has successfully provided programming through Prosperity 10,000 ("P10K") coupled through partnership with Clackamas Workforce Partnership ("CWP") and Worksystems, Inc. ("WSI"). IRCO was able to enroll 44 participants, of which 64% were women, 14 people identified as Hispanic, 5 as African/African American/Black, 4 Asian, and 1 Native American - including several participants who identified as Ukrainian. Since June 2023, 34 people had entered occupational skills training and 4 people had entered pre apprenticeship trainings for a total of 37 individuals trained in healthcare, early learning/early childhood education, transportation, and trades.

In total, 92% of individuals at IRCO's P10K had demonstrable completion of the program and became employed. Further, the well supported trainings from P10K allowed low-income immigrants, refugees and women to complete training while not risking losing their housing stability. In fact, some of our participants were able to step into some of the historical underrepresented profession like the semiconductor industry, construction, transportation, and warehousing allowing community to earn liveable wage. Across our WSI funded P10K program we served a total of 381 participants of which 54% were women and 73.75% people of color. In fact, 98% of our participants falls under priority population as defined by P10K. 65% of our previously unemployed participant were placed into employment. 100% of our participants previously unemployed were employed at or above P10K target of \$17/hour with average wage of our participants at \$23.40 per hour at placement. Across the duration of the program, we have spent almost \$240,000 of P10K resources directly supporting participants on utilities, transportation, tools, and housing while also connecting them to additional resources to ensure stability before they are self-sufficient.

In 2023, IRCO published our first Workforce Community Need Assessment funded by HECC Future Ready, Round 1. The report was built from focus groups of immigrant and refugee communities (e.g., Vietnamese, Ethiopian, Ukrainian, Latinx) to understand people's career background/interests, the barriers they face, and resources needed when trying to enter Oregon priority industries like Construction, manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology. Participants were interested in fields they've had prior training in or they'd been exposed to since arriving in the U.S. All participants worked in a variety of lower wage "survival jobs" (low-skilled jobs they obtain/stay in when participants first arrived in Oregon) particularly in industries like caregiving, education, custodial and hospitality, and food service. Participants cited the four most common employment barriers as 1) lack of information, connection, and exposure, 2) language barrier, 3) family/financial responsibilities and cost of training, 4)



Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization

10301 NE Glisan Street, Portland, OR 97220

www.irco.org

native degrees or qualifications not accepted. Thus the challenges faced by community continue to persist through the years.

With such benchmarks, we know that HB 3669 offers continuation and step forward in building a resilient workforce that supports refugee and immigrant communities and all communities across Oregon. In both the insights gained from our direct work and our IRCO Workforce Community Needs Assessment, we can say that what is needed is further support of such programming – not less. We know that for every \$1 dollar invested, Oregon will receive nearly \$3 dollars back through new tax revenue and reduced dependency on social service programming. Workforce funding is a key for community to not only get training and earn skill in the industries that are growing in Oregon, but it also allows community members to receive additional support ensuring the successful completion of the trainings to way to meaningfully enter the workforce. This is especially important for communities who are historically underrepresented in various industries that are growing in Oregon.

Oregon is better off when all communities can be supported to find pathways to self-sufficiency through meaningful work and stable jobs. Programs such as HB 3669's advancement of P10K are a part of what creates the pathway to resilient, self-sufficient, stable for all communities and individuals.

Respectfully,

Sokho Eath

Government Relations Director
Pacific Islander and Asian Family Center Director
The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization