



**SPRINGFIELD:** 1025 G Street | Springfield, OR 97477  
**EUGENE:** 1464 West 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue | Eugene, OR 97402  
**RISP:** 1055 Charnelton Street | Eugene, OR 97401  
541-345-3628 | [www.ccslc.org](http://www.ccslc.org)

Chair Prozanski and Vice-Chair Thatcher, Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Christine Zeller-Powell. I am the director of the Refugee and Immigrant Services Program at Catholic Community Services of Lane County. I am here in support of SB 703 and to share how Oregonians benefit from the case management, employment, and immigration legal services for refugees and other newcomers that Catholic Community Services of Lane County provides. Much of the funding for this work comes from the State of Oregon and allows us to help Oregonians achieve self-sufficiency and pursue permanent immigration statuses.

We currently have a state funded Newcomers Pilot Project that provides 6 months of wrap-around case management to recently arrived immigrants who are not eligible for traditional refugee services. In seven months, we have served more than 55 households. Because of the State of Oregon universal representation funding we receive, we have also been able to help these Pilot Project participants obtain work authorization. The combination of social services and immigration legal services is essential in helping these new Oregonians achieve self-sufficiency.

Oregon Department of Human Services funding for Afghan and Ukrainian populations over the past three years has allowed us to significantly expand our provision of immigration legal services. That funding is ending soon. Additional funding would allow us to take the expertise we have developed in humanitarian immigration law and serve a broader section of Oregonians. Increased funding for immigration legal services would allow us to provide much needed assistance with citizenship applications, family based petitions, and refugee green card applications. These types of applications are not prioritized under the Universal Representation program and assistance is greatly needed.

This work brings me great joy. I love when we can help a client file an asylum application, then when eligible six months later, help them apply for work authorization; and while they wait, have them work with one of our employment specialists to develop a resume and identify potential job opportunities. Then when their work authorization is granted, we help them through the interview and onboarding process. We've developed great partnerships with local businesses and manufacturers who have come to value our clients as hard-working employees. You can see the improvement in well-being as our refugee and immigrant clients go through this process. You can see the pride in the face of a former refugee as they stand with their certificate of naturalization in front of the American flag: a new citizen. The strength and resilience of our clients inspires me to continue this work and advocate for these programs. Immigration legal services are essential to help refugees and immigrants in Oregon find safety, economic stability, and navigate the complex US immigration system.

We have no doubt that the need for immigration legal services for Oregonians will continue and we look forward to partnering with the State of Oregon to meet those needs.