

Submitter: Mary Ann Barham
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB149

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

My name is Mary Ann Barham and I am a Social Justice leader at First Unitarian Church of Portland . I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 149, the “Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act”, because I have worked beside immigrant communities in Oregon for years and have witnessed the huge discrepancies in services available to them. It is especially heart wrenching to hear of immigrant families living on the streets of Portland because there are support services to house them, while others are eligible for refugee resettlement services to assist them with housing and other needs.

SB 149 expands the Extended Case Management program for refugees and other community members who are eligible, which will enable resettlement agencies and other CBOs to provide additional assistance to families who may need a little extra support when they arrive in Oregon to shelter and house their families, enroll in healthcare services, employment, and education opportunities, and begin a new life contributing to their community.

Immigrants' contributions to our economy, our schools, our churches, and our communities are immeasurable! SB 149 is an effort to support these essential members of our communities. This bill is the result of refugee resettlement agencies, immigrant-serving CBOs working together to ensure that we continue to welcome new neighbors well. It reflects the shared need for coordinating systems of support for new Oregonians.

People move - and like all new community members, a little bit of support and welcome goes a long way for our refugee and immigrant neighbors. This bill is an opportunity for Oregon to invest in welcoming its new community members and making them feel safe.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mary Ann Barham
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