

Submitter: Andy Harris
On Behalf Of: Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB149

My name is Andy Harris, and I'm testifying for SB 149 as a supporter of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

Being an immigrant or refugee has never been easy, but in the past few months it has become more of a risk in our country. Nearly every faith tradition, be it Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or other includes in its sacred texts the priority of welcoming the stranger.

A shortage of affordable housing is already a major concern in Oregon. We need to do more to house and provide support services to those who arrive in our state, many without speaking English, and often after fleeing traumatic experiences in their home country and during their travels.

SB 149 will create coordinated access to the support services needed for new Oregonians. When a new immigrant family arrives, they will be able to find the emergency support that they need in a timely way, so they can shelter and house their families, enroll in school and healthcare services, and begin a new life contributing to the community.

SB 149 also expands the Extended Case Management program for refugees and other community members who are eligible, which will enable resettlement agencies and other CBO's to provide additional assistance to families who may need a little extra support when they time out of traditional resettlement services.

All Oregonians will benefit from a coordinated system of reception for immigrants and refugees, helping them adjust to their new life in Oregon by finding housing, health care, employment, and educational opportunities.

Thank you for your support of SB 149.