

Submitter: Sharon Ericson
On Behalf Of: Parkrose Community United Church of Christ
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB149

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Sharon Ericson, and I am a member of Parkrose Community United Church of Christ in Northeast Portland. I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 149, the "Oregon's New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act". Our congregation has worked with several non-profits around issues of New Americans. We have focused on housing and food security historically. Last year we became involved with people from Venezuela who arrived in this country through legal migration channels without access to housing, translators, jobs, food or other basic human needs. We need to do better to assist those who are not benefiting from the wealth in this country. SB 149 expands the Extended Case Management program for refugees and other community members who are eligible. It will enable resettlement agencies and other CBO's 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.

By supporting newly arrived immigrant Oregonian families, refugee Oregonians, and having additional case management and stabilization available for those who need it, SB 149 will both coordinate with and alleviate pressure on the mainstream housing and emergency shelter system in Oregon.

SB 149 provides additional capacity so that when a new community member arrives with their children, they will not wait outside for the estimated 6+ months it currently takes to be supported through mainstream shelter and housing services.

SB 149 will amend ORS 411.139, passed in the 2019, to:

- Expand the definition of organizations who qualify to provide services to Oregon's new neighbors experiencing high vulnerability and systemic barriers.
 - Broaden the definition of refugee to include individuals who are pursuing immigration assistance and have been residing in this state for 24 months or less
- SB 149 results from a collaboration of refugee resettlement agencies and community-based organizations. It reflects the shared needs of newly arrived Oregonians and our joint vision that every person should have the tools they need to thrive.

People move - and like any new neighbor, 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 choose to invest in welcoming its newest neighbors well. In a time of great uncertainty for this community, your vote for SB 149 will mean that a new generation of Oregonians feels safer and welcomed in our beautiful state.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,

Sharon Ericson
Parkrose Community United Church of Christ