

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

My name is Brenda Wills, and I am a member of Wesley United Methodist Church in Eugene, Oregon, and a retired United Methodist Clergy who lived and served for 45 years in Drain, Yoncalla, Portland, Grants Pass, North Bend, Newport, Toledo and now, in retirement, in the River Road Neighborhood of Eugene, Oregon.

I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 149 “Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act” because it is essential to have some statewide funding to create an infrastructure for a coordinated system of reception. It will provide resources needed for Oregonians who have arrived seeking safety and protection to find housing, health care, employment and education. These neighbors can build relationships in their chosen communities, achieve their goals and contribute to our state with their passion, work, and leadership.

*I have traveled in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Mexico and have seen the resiliency of persons working hard to create home and community. I also have seen the craters left by landmines, the memorials for persons gathered up and burned in a church for disagreeing with their government, and seen evidence of torture. I know many who seek asylum and/or refugee status in our State (or anywhere in the USA) are not doing so for a fun adventure or to get rich, but simply to save their lives and the lives of their children.*

Immigration in the USA is broken. This will not fix that, but it will help Oregon be the good neighbor that we Oregonians want to be. We will be blessed by these neighbors. Our hospitality to them, in my faith tradition, is a requirement of being human.

SB 149 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.

Thank you for your work of all Oregonians!

Reverend Brenda Wills

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