

## Testimony – SB 149

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

My name is Olena Zahrebelna, and I am an Employment Specialist with Ukrainian and Extended Case Management Programs of Lutheran Community Services Northwest in Portland, Oregon. I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 194, the “Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act”, because this is matter for me to have an opportunity to help people who recently arrived in the US and need support.

LCSNW is proud to help newcomers with their first needs. The ECM Program grant is funded by the bill. Our team within the organization is very excited to be able to build a plan with our clients and help them achieve their goals to become self-sufficient. Many of my clients have no idea what they would do without our help and support.

This bill will do exactly what it says - create coordinated access to stabilizing support services for new Oregonians. When a new immigrant community member 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 their community.

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.

SB 149 will create infrastructure for a coordinated system of reception. It will provide the resources needed for Oregonians who have arrived seeking safety and protection to find housing, health care, employment, and education opportunities. This ensures our new neighbors can achieve their own goals of successfully contributing to our state.

The ECM program is very important. When people come to the United States, they have no idea how to find a job, especially those who do not speak English or speak only limited English. I am proud to have the opportunity to help people find a job, improve their lives, and feel safe. Our clients do not feel alone with the enormous stress around them. I can give them guidance and support on the path to self-sufficiency.

For example, I have a client, 18 yo, who lives with parents and 2 other siblings. She asked me to help her to find a job, because she needs to support her family. She completed a high school in her native country, and she would like to be as a CNA, but she doesn't speak English. We created a service plan, enrolled her at the Community College in English classes and find an

entry-level job for her where she works very hard. The employer could provide her with a flexible shift those days when she has classes.

So, now she has a long-term goal to improve her English, then get a CNA and next, find a job as a Nursing Assistant. For today, she is satisfied with her job and opportunity to improve her life and help her family.

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 the Oregon New Neighbors Coordinated Access Program will mean that a new generation of Oregonians feels safer and welcomed in our beautiful state.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,

Olena Zahrebelna, Employment Specialist