

Submitter: Hannah Nanke

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 Hannah Nanke and I am the Assistant Director of Resettlement at Salem For Refugees (SFR), a non-profit organization and resettlement agency that has been serving refugees in Salem, Oregon, since 2016. I am writing today to strongly advocate for the passage of SB 149, the “Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act,” because I have witnessed firsthand the tremendous impact that extended case management (ECM) services have had on our new neighbors over the past four years I’ve worked at SFR. As the one who is responsible for submitting the monthly ECM report, I’ve seen firsthand how these services provide critical support that helps refugees transition from dependence to independence, contributing to their ability to thrive in our community.

This bill will do exactly what it says – create coordinated access to stabilizing support services for new Oregonians. When a new immigrant or refugee community member arrives, they will have the opportunity to access emergency support in a timely way, allowing them to house their families, enroll in school and healthcare services, and begin to integrate into their new life as active contributors to the community.

SB 149 expands the Extended Case Management program for refugees and other eligible community members, which will enable resettlement agencies and community-based organizations to provide additional assistance to families who need extra support after traditional resettlement services have ended.

By supporting newly arrived immigrant and refugee Oregonians, and offering additional case management and stabilization for those who need it, SB 149 will help alleviate pressure on Oregon’s mainstream housing and emergency shelter systems. It will also allow resettlement agencies to provide continued support so that new neighbors can successfully navigate systems like healthcare, employment, education, and housing. Without this support, many refugees would struggle to find their footing and contribute to the community as they truly have the potential to.

SB 149 is the result of collaboration between refugee resettlement agencies, immigrant-serving community-based organizations, and government agencies, all working together to ensure we continue to welcome new neighbors in the most effective way possible. It reflects the shared need for coordinated access to existing systems of support, which will help new Oregonians integrate smoothly into their new communities.

Immigrants and refugees contribute immeasurably to our economy, our schools, our faith communities, and our broader social fabric. From providing essential labor to enriching our communities with diverse perspectives, the contributions of new Oregonians are indispensable.

I've seen this firsthand in my work at Salem For Refugees. We've worked with over 1,500 unique individuals since 2016, many of whom have relied on ECM services to navigate challenges such as learning English, finding stable employment, accessing healthcare, and advocating for their children's education. These services are not just about survival—they are about empowering our new neighbors to thrive. Without SB 149, many of our new neighbors would lack the critical support necessary to become self-sufficient, making it harder for them to fully integrate into our community.

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 invest in welcoming its newest neighbors and providing them with the tools they need to succeed. In a time of uncertainty, your support for the Oregon New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act will ensure that a new generation of Oregonians feels safe, valued, and empowered to contribute to the state we all share.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,
Hannah Nanke | Asst. Director of Resettlement | Salem For Refugees