

Submitter: Paloma Sharangpani
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 Paloma Sharangpani and I am involved in reproductive health work and education at local community clinics in Portland. I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 194, the “Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act”, because as a first-generation immigrant, I care deeply about immigrant families newly arriving to my community. Families entering our community, whether they are immigrants, refugees, or others who access community resources, deserve access to stable housing and strong community support as they settle in a new place. SB 149 provides additional capacity so that when a new community member arrives with their children, they do not have to wait without support for the estimated 6+ months it currently takes to be assisted through mainstream shelter and housing services. Oregon has a responsibility to care for all residents, and connecting immigrant to state healthcare, education and housing systems will not only ease their transition to a new place, but will strengthen and enrich our communities. This bill will do exactly what it says - create coordinated access to the 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. The Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act is the result of refugee resettlement agencies, immigrant-serving CBOs, and government agency collaboration working together to ensure that we continue to welcome new neighbors well. It reflects the shared need for coordinated access to existing systems of support for new Oregonians.

At my nonprofit, we offer transitional housing and food services to unhoused and low-income community members, many of whom are immigrant and refugee families. It is painfully clear that that community need outweighs the capacity of our organization— for every family we can serve, there are hundreds more we are unable to support. Oregon has not welcomed its new community members adequately, and too many are without the resources they need to establish healthy and sustainable lives in our state. There is a pressing need to improve our current systems so these community members can have access to the support that they deserve.

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,
Paloma Sharangpani