

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

My name is Rev Stephanie Ahn Mathis and I am a Co-Senior Pastor at West Hills Covenant Church in Portland, OR and a daughter of South Korean immigrants.

I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 194, the “Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act” because God has commanded us to particularly care for the most vulnerable amongst us: widows, the fatherless, and immigrants as a witness of God’s radical love, compassionate justice and hospitality for all people. It is throughout the Biblical story from Abraham who became an immigrant to be a blessing to all nations, when God liberated the slaves from Pharaoh’s oppressive hand and reminded them to treat the immigrants as native-borns because they too were once immigrants, and to Jesus, a citizen of heaven, who immigrated to earth to live amongst us and model real, healing love. Jesus tells us in Matthew 25 that when we welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, etc., we do so to Christ Himself.

Over the last couple years, our church has renovated a small house on our property and has welcomed over a dozen families from all over the world in partnership with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s SOAR (their Immigrant and Refugee Ministry). Since the recent executive orders, for the first time in years, our little Cottage has been empty and it has had a big impact on many of the families who had waited years patiently through extensive processes to have safety, refuge, and a new life apart from fear and violence.

This bill will be living out the kind of neighbor-care that I believe God has called us to do by creating 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.

- 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.
- 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
- SB 149 provides additional capacity so that when a new community member arrives with their children, they cannot wait outside for the estimated 6+ months it currently takes to be supported through mainstream shelter and housing 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
- **We have shown that we can work together to ensure that ALL communities thrive.** This bill was created with the commitment to the thriving of all communities. We are unwilling to pit the needs of one new Oregonian community against each other or other communities.
- Immigrants contributions to our economy, our schools, our churches, our communities are immeasurable

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,

Rev. Stephanie Ahn Mathis