

Submitter: Elijah Penner

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB149

My name is Elijah Penner and I work at Salem for Refugees.

I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 149, the "Oregon's New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act".

Refugees arriving in Oregon for the first time face a myriad of challenges getting settled into their new lives here in Oregon. As a resettlement agency, SFR assists in the first few months to provide a wide range of initial core services. However, funds allocated through SB 149 help ensure agencies like SFR are able to continue walking alongside families for as long as there is a need to ensure the family's long term stability / ability to integrate successfully into the community and thrive.

One area we specifically see refugee families needing extended support is in navigating our complex and fragmented healthcare system. Families frequently arrive to our country with a wide range of unmet health needs. Some are in need of life saving procedures. Others may be entering a new pregnancy, or dealing with a newly diagnosed chronic condition that requires care coordination across multiple specialties. Quality care is available for these families, but accessing that care requires persistence in calling clinics, tracking down specialist referrals, advocating with care providers for various interpretation needs and most of all - time - because even when doing all of these things, the limited capacity across primary and specialty clinics at this time mean appointments get scheduled months out. SB 149 helps ensure case managers with lived refugee experience can continue supporting families in this process until their needs are met.

SB 149 also ensures immigrant families arriving in Oregon from other parts of the country are provided 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. 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

Immigrants contributions to our economy, our schools, our churches, our communities are immeasurable.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.