

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

My name is Mariam Ghabry, and I am an ECM Case Manager of Lutheran community Services Northwest, covering clients across Multnomah and Washington counties, Oregon. I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 194, the “Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act”, is essential because it ensures that newcomers have equitable access to critical resources, helping them build stability and thrive in our communities.

This act matters to me as an Extended Case Manager at LCSNW because it creates a more supportive system for individuals I’m serving and seeking housing and other essentials services, reducing barriers that often prevent them from getting the help they need.

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.

Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act is a step toward a more inclusive and compassionate community, ensuring that new residents regardless of their circumstances, can access essential support.

I care about this act as a case manager at LCSNW handling cases and part of my community because it promotes fairness and efficiency in connecting individuals to vital services, strengthening the overall well-being of our neighborhoods and fostering long-term success.

- 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
- I am honored to support newcomers at LCSNW, refugees and immigrants seeking assistance, within their first critical five years in the U.S. I have witnessed firsthand how newly arrived families, especially those with minor children, navigate the system step by step to establish their first home. From sleeping on the floor to gaining stability, I help connect them with vital resources and services related to housing, furnishing their homes, Employment and accessing medical and mental health care. Additionally, I support them in integrating with community around them and into the school system to foster sustainability, attendance, and a healthy environment that prioritizes the well-being of both children and parents.
- Over time, I see families achieve self-sufficiency through employment and a stable, nurturing home, ready to welcome a newborn into a happy and secure environment. There are countless examples, including families facing challenges due to disabilities, where I walk alongside them, ensuring they know there is hope and a light at the end of the tunnel.
- Without a doubt, housing and essential services are the foundation for any family striving for stability and security. That is why I am advocating for Oregon's New Neighbors Bill, to extend hope to families building new lives in this beloved land, seeking prosperity and growth. It is truly rewarding to see children/ Families take promising steps toward their education, mental health, and well-being, knowing we have helped secure a healthy and supportive atmosphere for their lives in Oregon.

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,

Mariam Ghabry

ECM Case Manager/ LCSNW