

4/7/25

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re' SB 149-3

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the Committee,

My name is Rachel Hansen, and for years, I've dedicated my career and personal life to serving Oregon's most vulnerable communities through case management, advocacy, and coalition building. I'm here today in support of SB 149-3 because it represents a transformative step forward in how Oregon welcomes and uplifts refugees and newcomers—ensuring they receive the comprehensive, culturally responsive support they need to thrive.

I've witnessed how professional case management can mean the difference between struggle and stability. Families navigating complex systems—housing, healthcare, education, and employment—often face barriers that are invisible to those of us who take these systems for granted. SB 149-3 changes that. It guarantees trained professionals can guide families toward stable housing, trauma-informed care, language access, and workforce integration. Critically, it provides 24 months of continuous support, recognizing that true integration doesn't happen overnight.

This bill also fixes a glaring gap in our current system: the exclusion of culturally specific organizations—those doing the most effective, on-the-ground work—simply because they don't fit rigid bureaucratic definitions. Too often, these groups are sidelined despite their deep expertise. SB 149-3 corrects these inequities by valuing cultural competency as expertise, requiring providers to demonstrate understanding of beliefs, practices, and linguistic needs—not just paperwork compliance. SB 149-3 also invests in sustainable success, linking families to legal aid, financial literacy, and long-term stability programs.

The data is clear: When we support refugees and immigrants properly, *everyone benefits*. Children excel in school, adults contribute higher-skilled labor, and families become resilient, tax-paying community members. But when we fail them—when appointments are missed due to language barriers, or parents take underpaid jobs due to credentialing hurdles—we all pay the price.

Oregon can and must do better. SB 149-3 is that opportunity. It's a smart, compassionate policy that aligns our values with action, ensuring everyone—regardless of origin, language, or background—has the tools to succeed. I urge you to pass this bill.

Respectfully,
Rachel Hansen
McMinnville, Oregon