

Submitter:	Iryna Kniazieva
On Behalf Of:	Lutheran Community Services Northwest
Committee:	Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	SB149

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

My name is Iryna Kniazieva, and I am a Case manager (Multilingual) at Lutheran Community Services Northwest in Portland, Oregon. I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 194, the "Oregon's New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act", because it plays a crucial role for newly arrived immigrants and refugees for their successful integration and self-sufficiency, offering individualized support to overcome barriers and navigate complex systems, ultimately fostering stability and long-term well-being. Newly arrived immigrants often face numerous challenges, including language barriers, unfamiliar legal and social systems, and cultural differences. Extended case management provides a dedicated point of contact and guidance to help them navigate these complexities.

Many immigrants, especially refugees and asylum seekers, may have experienced trauma or have specific vulnerabilities that require specialized support. Extended case management can provide tailored services to address these needs, such as mental health support, trauma-informed counseling, and access to specialized resources.

LCSNW is proud to help newcomers with their first needs. The ECM Program grant is funded by the bill. Our team within the organization is very excited to be able to build a plan with our clients and help them achieve their goals to become self-sufficient. ECM can play a vital role in helping immigrants become economically self-sufficient.

Our team of case managers can:

- assist with job searching, resume writing, and accessing employment training programs, as well as connecting immigrants with resources for financial literacy and budgeting.
- help immigrants build social connections and integrate into their new communities.
- connect immigrants with community organizations, cultural events, and social activities, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing isolation.

Extended case management ensures that immigrants have access to essential resources, such as housing, healthcare, and legal services. Case managers can help immigrants navigate the system to access these resources and advocate for their needs.

Unlike short-term programs, extended case management provides ongoing support to help immigrants achieve their goals and build a stable future. This long-term support can be crucial for immigrants who are struggling to adjust to a new country and overcome significant challenges.

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 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.

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.

One of our current clients are the family of seven from Myanmar (Burma), newly arrived in Portland, OR. Family had no support from relatives or friends and even had no clothing for the children. The head of the household is the only who can work but the language barrier was the main problem to find a good job for him. As a result, they are struggling to pay their rent and utility bills. Family is dealing with lots of barriers and difficulties and the main ECM's goal was to help them manage their immediate needs while we work on a self-sufficiency plan that focuses on employment and long-term stability. Our Employment team successfully found a good job for him and the rent payment is not a challenge for the family now. The client saved money for future rent payments. His wife and smallest son had mental health issues and because of it was referred to mental health service and as result – they can manage their stress and successfully integrated to the new culture. All clients' kids were enrolled in the school and parents understand about the US school system and how to support their child's learning. We helped families to get good clothing and school supplies for their kids. The family learned how to navigate resources and have access to food and food banks. Information about ESOL classes in the LCSNW was provided to the client and he showed interest in active participation in ESOL classes and took part in them. The client's family is involved in social activities, is familiar with US culture, and feels satisfied with his life and social skills. The client is stable and has reached a comfort level in meeting basic needs now.

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,

Iryna Kniazieva, Case manager (Multilingual), LCSNW