

Submitter: Terry Morton

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB149

Dear Members,

I have volunteered with refugees and asylum seekers in Lane County for 4 years. We were shocked and saddened when the President's Executive Order suspended the Refugee Admissions Program in January, and again yesterday when the US Catholic Bishops, the member agency through whom we received federal resettlement funds, closed their Refugee Program.

Throughout these years, asylum seekers and parolees have had huge challenges in resettling here. The majority don't understand the law or how to apply for asylum, they aren't eligible for the benefits normally given to refugees like SNAP, TANF, and Refugee Cash, and although they're eligible for OHP and WIC, they may not know how to access it. They also want help with finding jobs when their work permits come, and have great difficulty finding housing, because in addition to the low occupancy rate and high rents in Eugene, they also lack local rental history to show prospective landlords, and often the security deposit plus rent requires cash reserves that few have.

Today, you have an opportunity to take the funds currently reserved for refugees, and put them to good use for asylum seekers and parolees instead. Senate Bill 149 will allow the funds usually directed to case management, housing, and other support. Finally, it would allocate funds toward these purposes, which would mean a path to stability for hundreds of newcomer families.

Please support SB 149!

Theresa Morton