

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

My name is Ann Smart, and I am a member of the Zonta Club of Corvallis and First Christian Church of Corvallis . I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 149, the “Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act”, because we have refugees in our community that are adding to our rich culture. These families have been through a lot to get here from Afghanistan, Syria and other places. Our federal government appears to be abandoning the initial support they were to receive. Many helped us during a time of war and now we need to help them get a good start in their new community.

This bill will do exactly what it says - create coordinated access to the 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.

- 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.

- Immigrant contributions to our economy, our schools, our faith communities, our towns are immeasurable
- I'm old enough to remember when the Vietnam refugees arrived in Oregon. As a manager at Linn-Benton Community College, we stepped up and provided English lessons geared with short-term training and helped these displaced people quickly find productive jobs. The parents didn't reach the levels of careers they had in Vietnam, but they worked hard, and their children have become successful thriving citizens.
- As a member of two organizations that have stepped up to help the newest refugees adjust, I have seen a new energy among our members. Americans care about other people and want to support our new neighbors. We need the support from non-profits to help us do this in the best way possible. SB 149 will provide those support services for our volunteers and new neighbors.

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 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 feel safer and welcomed in our beautiful state.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Ann Smart
Member Zonta Club of Corvallis
Member First Christian Church of Corvallis