

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

My name is Melba Damaris Hernandez, and I am a beneficiary of the Refugee Resettlement program, recently relocated to Corvallis. I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 149, the “Oregon’s New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act”, because as refugee myself, I know the importance of getting help to restart your life.

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.

- Immigrants contributions to our economy, our schools, our churches, our communities are immeasurable
- When I left my country with nothing but the clothes I was wearing, but thanks to the help that I have received I am now able to integrate myself in the workforce and to give back by volunteering in environmental protection activities that are values not just to our State but to the earth.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and a horizontal line at the bottom.