

Submitter:	Lynne Swift
On Behalf Of:	SB149
Committee:	Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	SB149

I have been a volunteer with Oregon Community Asylum Network, an all-volunteer program, since 2020 and have been involved in the lives of many asylum seekers who have come to the U.S. to escape gang violence and domestic violence in their home country. The hardships they have endured to get here are unimaginable-- months of journeying on foot through treacherous territory, near starvation, the agonizing inability to fully protect their children from harm, endless health issues, detention and many forms of cruelty. I have met many extraordinary individuals who, despite these daunting circumstances, have arrived, still full of hope for a better life for themselves and their children. Often, there are not many resources to help them because, although they may have crossed the border legally, they are not determined to be refugees, legally, and cannot get help from refugee resource programs. OCAN members have taken them in to live in their homes for long periods of time, have fed and clothed them, arranged medical care, sometimes at their own expense, transported them to clinics for treatment, helped them find work when they were able to get a work permit. Every single person wants to work, to contribute, to be self-supporting and contribute to the greater community. One person I know has had a full-time job and two part-time jobs ever since he's been legally able to work. These are human beings whose unfortunate circumstances are out of their control. Just being able to provide basic shelter, food and health care gives them a sturdy platform from which to be a contributing part of the larger community. Our care for them ultimately benefits us all.