

Submitter:	Ann Heath
On Behalf Of:	Salem for Refugees
Committee:	Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	SB149

I have witnessed the extraordinary services Salem for Refugees has provided to our new neighbors/arrivees. I was one of a team who presented information during cultural orientation sessions about Mental Health services. The refugees I met were newly arrived and from many different places of origin and had waited, sometimes years, to make it to US and safe haven in Salem.

This program provides support and services to mostly traumatized refugees coping with extreme stress. The support of extended casemanagement is crucial as refugees begin the long journey to feeling really at home in a new country. Extending casemanagement services beyond initial period of resettlement is crucial in my opinion.

Some of the Refugees I met spoke English, but most did not. They face adjustment to new home, language, customs,seperation from family members.

Volunteers have stepped forward and the benefits have been reciprocal.The Salem Community has welcomed Refugees with open arms and many volunteers, churches, other community partners have stepped up to help.

Dispite this support, having casemanagers who are walking side by side, who have been on this journey themselves, can speak their language, understand customs and act as empathetic advocates for individualized services, are the biggest predictor of succesful adjustment.

As you may imagine, this is not an adjustment that takes a few weeks. In my opinion as a social worker and mental health counselor, It is crucial that casemanagers are able to extend time as needed to each individual as their lives begin to stabilize.

I have been inspired by the resilience of refugees and as they move forward, and the gifts they bring to our community.