

Submitter: Yulia Brockdorf
On Behalf Of: DAWN
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB149

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Yulia Brockdorf, and I am the founder and president of DAWN, an Oregon-based non-profit that provides essential services to Ukrainian refugees and immigrants. These services include housing assistance, employment assistance, and mental and physician health services.

Since the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion, thousands of Ukrainian refugees have fled their homes and settled in Oregon. Refugees often arrive having directly experienced the horrors of war. For those that haven't, many have family and friends still in Ukraine, where they are in constant fear for their lives and wellbeing. All Ukrainians carry the collective trauma having watched, for three years, the destruction and desecration of their homeland by a foreign invader who wishes to erase them.

The collective trauma I am describing, and the long-term health and wellness impacts that come with it, is something few in the West can understand—but it is not unique to Ukrainians. Atrocities around the world, from Syria to Afghanistan to Myanmar to Uganda, bring families fleeing the worst of human nature to safe havens around the world, including right here in Oregon. These safe havens resemble, in contrast, the very best of humanity. Refugees without shelter can find housing assistance programs, offering a safe place for their family to get started in their new community. Those without the income to sustain themselves can access employment assistance, which provides them the level playing field to compete in a job market they don't know, while also benefiting their new community through the work they do and the taxes they pay. And for those who really have experienced unthinkable horror, safe havens like Oregon provide access to critical mental health and wellness services that help people recover and thrive.

But these services are not free or easy to administer, and they often take longer than traditional case management timelines allow. SB 149 expands the Extended Case Management program for refugees and other community members who are eligible, which will enable resettlement agencies and other Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to provide additional assistance to families who may need extra support when they time out of traditional resettlement services.

This is essential for the community I serve at DAWN simply because of their circumstances and the conditions of their arrival. Many Ukrainian refugees come in

need of long-term support, from English-language learning to extended mental health support. A lack of access to these services hurts the communities we are trying to help and hurts Oregonians by asking them to host vulnerable communities while depriving them of the productive neighbors, workers, and taxpayers that they otherwise could be if provided with proper services.

SB 149 is a smart and strategic investment in the communities that are most in need of our help and who have so much to give.

With great enthusiasm, I urge your aye vote on SB 149.

Yulia Brockdorf