Submitter: Tyra Grauer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB149

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

My name is Tyra Grauer and I am both a pastor of Wellspring Covenant Church and the Welcome Home Coordinator at Corvallis For Refugees.

I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 149, the "Oregon's New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act", because it directly impacts the families I work with daily. They are fleeing situations of grave harm and are seeking to find communities where they can invest their time and considerable talents. They find themselves in Oregon where they are recreating lives for their families and are striving to become contributing members of our communities.

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. The traditional 90 days is just short of what families as there can be a 3 month wait for medical benefits to begin after gaining employment.

? 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.

? The family our church sponsors took 2 ½ months to find jobs despite applying and interviewing multiple times. The access to medical and limited SNAP benefits really helped them to gain self sufficiency. They have been in the country now only 4 ½ months and will be fully independent of SNAP in June and off medical coverage in one month. They will not be needing any more government support after this initial period as they are eager to work and stay employed. They are now paying taxes, jumping into volunteering and community involvement. They add value to our community!

This bill is an opportunity for Oregon to invest in welcoming its newest neighbors. Your vote for the Oregon New Neighbors Coordinated Access Program will mean that a new Oregonians feels safer and welcomed.

Thank you for your consideration,

Tyra Grauer
Pastor, Wellspring Covenant Church
Welcome Home Coordinator, CFR