

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

My name is Kristi McMorran. I am a retired teacher. I have spent my career teaching English skills to immigrants and refugees in Oregon. I am writing to advocate for the passage of SB 149, the "Oregon's New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act", because new arrivals need to be able to flourish and that takes time. Moving to a brand new country, learning the language and successfully navigating the myriad of social services, health and education systems is extremely challenging to do in the traditional period of time allowed. This bill will 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 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. 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.**

I have spent the past 10 months working closely with a refugee family. I have seen with my own eyes how willing they are to be independent and self-supporting, but I have also seen the immense struggle it is to be completely self-sufficient within 90 days of arrival. It would be a challenge for anyone! By expanding the Extended Case Management program, our Oregon refugee individuals and families would have the crucial extra layer of support that would allow them to truly flourish and thrive.

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,

Sincerely,

Kristi T. McMorran