

Submitter: Joshua Dunham  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

My name is Rev. Joshua Dunham and I am the pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Gresham. I am also a resident of East Portland. I live in Rep. Valderrama's district and my church is in Rep. Ruiz's district. Thank you both for your service to East Multnomah County.

I am writing today to advocate for the passage of SB 149, the "Oregon's New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act", because I am a resident and pastor rooted in the epicenter of refugee resettlement in Oregon, I care deeply for my neighbors both new and old, and I believe my faith calls me to care for the stranger and foreigner among us.

Last year my congregation became aware that due to gaps in funding and support, there were multiple recently arrived families that would be without housing on Easter Sunday. For the people of my church, this was appalling. How could we as Christians stand by as our fellow beloved children of God, were put out on the street after they arrived in the richest country in the world looking for support and aid? So we organized a march of solidarity in East County on Holy Saturday, used a substantial amount of our own church funds to pay for housing, and gave testimony to County Commissioners. This work luckily led to the Multnomah County Commissioners not heaving families into the street and continuing to provide housing for those who are newly arrived to our state and region.

From this work we recognized that we, as a small church cannot do it alone. That it takes many organizations; including churches, and CBOs, and big-hearted individuals, schools, and yes even the city, county, and state government to help us provide support for these newly arrived neighbors. SB149 will ensure that more of these newly arriving families can receive supportive services and this seems more critical now than ever. So I ask you, as a pastor, as a resident, as a father, to help more families thrive in Oregon and vote yes for SB149. Thank you.