

The Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
10301 NE Glisan Street, Portland, OR 97220

April 23, 2025

Dear Co-chairs Sollman and Ruiz, and members of the committee,

Since 1976, the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization ("IRCO") has been supporting our refugee and immigrant communities in achieving self-sufficiency by overcoming the barriers to build meaningful lives in Oregon and across our region. Today, through IRCO's mission to welcome, serve and empower refugees, immigrant, and people across cultures and generations to reach their full potential, IRCO recognizes the positive impact of a strong, sustained investment in Oregon's public higher education system.

Investing in higher education and education broadly changes and transforms lives, giving opportunities to individuals, their families and their community to succeed regardless of income, background, or location. For many in our refugee and immigrant communities, such investments are uplifting pathways to supporting resilient communities. These investments in higher education are long term and deeply felt by many who come from refugee and immigrant families.

The Oregon State Legislature must continue to commit to the investments in our public colleges and universities to open the doors of opportunity that an education can provide.

We urge the Oregon State Legislature to continue the investments found in SB 5525 including the investments toward the Oregon Opportunity Grant to expand financial aid for low- and moderate-income students, the investment to the Public University Support Fund to keep tuition manageable and maintain academic quality, and the support to the basic needs as found in HB 3182 and 3183, which provides support in food and housing assistance.

For many in our community, especially those served by IRCO and our dedicated partners, such investments mean that often first-generation college and university students, including students of refugee and immigrant backgrounds and families, can continue forward to earning their degree, and give back to Oregon's economy. These students can work towards self-sufficiency, being a part of the workforce pipeline, and keeping the communities that make up Oregon and Oregon's economy strong.

Sincerely,

Sokho Eath
IRCO Pacific Islander & Asian Family Center Director
IRCO Government Relations Director

