

Dear House Committee on Housing and Human Services,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2508 requiring DHS to award grants to refugee resettlement agencies to provide services to refugees arriving in Oregon.

I have been volunteering and working for refugee serving organizations since I was a junior in high school (13 years). I work with Catholic Charities of Oregon to coordinate a group of high schools who welcomed newly arrived refugees. I even dedicated my thesis and several graduate school research projects to learning about how to best serve refugees and the trauma they experience. I worked closely with Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program and saw first hand their struggle to continue to provide necessary services and case management to newly arriving refugees while the federal government cuts funding and support for refugee services.

In addition to loss of federal funds, the current housing crisis in Oregon taxes refugee resettlement agencies as they struggle to secure affordable housing for refugee families hoping to start a new life in Oregon. Catholic Charities opened a new site in Salem to resettle families there, which was a big ask for the program director to do. She had to travel back and forth from Salem and create new relationships with locals and educate them on how to best welcome refugees. She ended up leaving the position shortly after because of the increasing demands and the cuts in funding.

HB 2508 could provide much needed relief to refugee resettlement organizations by acknowledging the emergency the federal government has created and providing access to funds needed to support families adjusting to their new life in Oregon.

Please feel free to contact me with any follow up questions or for further comment.

Sincerely,
Camerina Galvan
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