



From the Desk of
Representative
Carla C. Piluso



Please Vote YES on HB 2508!

JUN 24 2019



Dear members of the Oregon House of Representatives,

We, the undersigned organizations, coalitions, and individuals, urge your support for HB 2508, which would provide critical case management services for refugees in Oregon. Collectively and individually, we believe in Oregon's history of welcoming refugees. This state has stood, proudly, as a safe haven for people fleeing war, famine, disease, persecution, and other forms of violence across the world, welcoming 67,000 refugees since 1975. **At a time when an unprecedented number of people worldwide are becoming refugees, Oregon must continue to live up to our legacy as a light shining in the darkness.**

Unfortunately, that legacy is under threat, as federal budget cuts have drastically slashed the number of refugees who are welcomed to the US every year. This has imperiled the local case management programs which are so crucial to newly-arrived refugees' success in our communities, including English language instruction, help in finding and settling into housing, educational and school supports, employment services, and more. If we do not act, we jeopardize the ability of new arrivals to thrive, putting them on the path to financial hardship and social isolation.

House Bill 2508 will replenish the drastically-reduced federal funding to refugee resettlement agencies in order to prevent cuts to critical services for recently-arrived refugees. With the funds provided by HB 2508, refugee resettlement agencies will be able to continue offering high-quality programs and services to help new arrivals settle into life in Oregon. While our state alone cannot influence how many refugees are allowed into the U.S., with your support, our resettlement agencies and partner organizations can continue the proud work of providing hope to recently arrived refugees, and of preparing for tomorrow's arrivals.

We echo the words of the late Senator Mark Hatfield, from testimony he provided to the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Policy in 1983:

"I do not pretend to have the magic number that will represent the perfect balance. However, without hesitation, I will state that the United States' role in providing assistance to the countries of first asylum who bear the immediate brunt of refugee migration, and in providing shelter for our appropriate share of the refugee population, must not decline. This does not mean that the United States should admit everyone fleeing war or the threat of war. It

means...that if we abandon our responsibility to uphold freedom by providing hope to those who are not free, then we have failed history and we have failed ourselves."

Our refugee neighbors and community members are Oregonians. They contribute to the fabric of life in this state in immeasurable ways, strengthening our culture and economy. And at an unprecedented historical moment, refugees need your support. We strongly urge your YES vote on HB 2508.

Sincerely,

African Family Holistic Health Organization
Aimee's Community Care LLC
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Oregon Chapter
Asian Health & Service Center
Cascadia Health Care
Catholic Charities of Oregon
Coalition of Communities of Color
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
El Programa Hispano Catolico
Eliot's Adult Nut Butters
Epidocus
Familias en Accion
IRCO
Indow
Inner Nature Acupuncture LLC
Iraqi Society
Lutheran Community Services Northwest
Muslim Educational Trust
NK Realty
Never Again Coalition
Noraneko

Oregon Community Health Workers
Association
Oregon Latino Health Coalition
Portland Business Alliance
Portland Refugee Support Group
Portland State University School of Social
Work
Providence Health & Services
RAIN International
Refugee Volunteer Organization
Salem For Refugees
Sequoia Mental Health Services
Sirena Pictures
Tri County Behavioral Health Providers
Association
Unite Oregon
United Nations Association Portland
Chapter
UpBuild
We Hire Refugees
Wolf Water Resources
Zomi Community Portland Oregon