

HB 2508 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Human Services and Housing

Action Date: 03/13/19
Action: Do pass with amendments
and be referred to Ways and Means by prior reference. (Printed A-Eng.)
Vote: 9-0-0-0
Yeas: 9 - Helt, Keny-Guyer, Meek, Mitchell, Noble, Sanchez, Schouten, Williams, Zika
Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued
Revenue: No revenue impact
Prepared By: Amie FenderSosa, LPRO Analyst
Meeting Dates: 2/27, 3/13

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires Department of Human Services to award grants to Refugee Resettlement Agencies for specified services. Appropriates moneys from General Fund to that end. Defines "eligible agency" and "refugee." Declares emergency, effective July 1, 2019.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Need for additional resources to continue assisting refugees in Oregon
- Greater social costs that come to light later, when initial opportunities to assist are interrupted or ended due to lack of resources
- History of refugee resettlement in Oregon; trauma and ongoing difficulty experienced by refugees
- Shoestring budget of most non-profit resettlement agencies
- Geneva Convention protections for refugees
- Legal status of "refugees" granted by United Nations, and vetted by U.S. Departments of State and Homeland Security
- Extending duration of assistance from 90 days to two years; to stabilize beyond triage of immediate housing, food, and medical treatment needs
- Number of resettlement sites in Oregon (three)
- Receipt of federal funds from U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, and U.S. Departments of State, and Health and Human Services for state assistance programs
- Modeling after Utah's bill for same program to provide continuum of care, trauma-informed care and access to needed services
- Concerns about provisions of -1 amendment

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Appropriates additional \$250,000 for coordination of employment services. Expands definition of refugee.

BACKGROUND:

The Refugee Case Services Project (RCSP) is a public/private partnership between the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Refugee Resettlement Agencies (RRAs). The RCSP assists refugees in the Portland metropolitan area for up to eight months after they arrive in the United States, since most refugees in Oregon initially resettle in that area. If a refugee resettles outside of the Portland metropolitan area, they may seek assistance from programs administered by their local DHS office (including cash assistance and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)), while referrals are made to locally contracted entities for employment services and to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) for public health coverage.

House Bill 2508 A appropriates General Fund dollars to the Department of Human Services for distribution to Refugee Resettlement Agencies for specified services.