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February 10, 2020

RE: House Bill 4099

Chair Doherty and members of the committee:

For the record, my name is Carla Piluso and I proudly represent House District 50, the great city of Gresham.

Last year, the Oregon Legislature voted overwhelmingly to support funding for Oregon refugees. We were only the third state in the country to do that. We recognized then that when we set immigrants and refugees on the path to success, we are all better off.

HB 4099 is a chance to continue that work. It will give COFA migrants, refugees, and Special Immigrant Visa holders, access to in-state tuition.

These groups who have faced enormous obstacles in their journeys to the United States. COFA islanders have faced economic difficulties and major barriers in the United States due to their legal status. Refugees have fled war, persecution, and violence, and have often spent years in overseas refugee camps. And Special-Immigrant-Visa-holders have faced threats in their home countries because of their work with American armed forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We know that despite these obstacles, immigrants and refugees are incredibly resilient, and they make enormous contributions to our state. They go to college, hold jobs, and own businesses at similar or higher rates than citizens born on American soil.

I'm proud to live in a state that welcomes newcomers—and one of the best ways we can welcome newcomers is by breaking down the barriers that keep them from being successful. This bill will impact a relatively small number of people, but it will have a big impact on some of our newest neighbors. And it will signal that Oregon remains a welcoming place.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I urge you to support House Bill 4099.

Sincerely,

Carla C. Piluso
Oregon State Representative, House District 50