



March 30, 2021

Chair Floyd Prozanski  
Vice-Chair Kim Thatcher  
Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

RE: SB 778 – Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 778, establishing an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement. My name is Elona J Wilson, and I am the Advocacy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color, an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations with representation from African, African American, Latinx, Middle Eastern and North African, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Slavic communities in Oregon.

The Coalition of Communities of Color's mission is to address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity of services experienced by our families, children and communities; and to organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice and prosperity.

In the vein of prosperity, we must ask ourselves how we can better support Oregon's collective prosperity; one of the answers is SB 778. This bill would establish not just an office, but that Oregon values our refugees and immigrants as Oregonians. The services this office will provide will be vast: including short-term resources for immediate needs and long-term supports. It will also collect and analyze data to cater to the individual needs of our very diverse immigrant and refugee population.

Many of our member organizations work directly to support immigrants and refugees, creating the conditions they need to thrive in our state. Adding a state-level office to provide higher level planning and coordination, as well as data analysis. Based on CCC's years of conducting culturally-appropriate research on the experiences of communities of color, we know that it is essential to have accurate disaggregated data, including that for our immigrant and refugee communities. As a cross-cultural coalition, we know that communities of color are not monolithic, and understand the need across different identities of immigrants and refugees will





help inform policies and resource allocations to best meet their diverse needs. Many of our member organizations do incredible work serving these communities, but a state-level office will support

Immigrants and refugees make up over 13 percent of our work force and contribute a substantial amount in taxes to our state. Three of our neighboring states have established similar offices, solidifying their commitment to serving immigrants and refugees as Oregonians. Immigrants and refugees are our neighbors, our friends, our colleagues, our students and needless to say, they are Oregonians and they matter.

At the coalition, we celebrate diversity and work to address the disparities facing our communities of color and this office will bring us one step closer to our commitment as a state for equity and inclusion. In the vein of equity and on behalf of the Coalition of Communities of Color, I urge you to take action to support Oregon's collective prosperity by voting yes on SB 778.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elona J. Wilson".

Elona J Wilson  
Advocacy Director  
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