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March 31st, 2021

Re: Supporting SB 718- Welcoming Refugees Bill

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Anya Holcomb and I serve as Co-Director of **Salem For Refugees**. Salem For Refugees is an organization that exists to bring people and resources together to empower refugees to thrive in the Salem/Keizer community. Salem for Refugees strongly supports passage of SB 718.

Passed in 2019, the Welcoming Refugees Bill has provided the resources necessary to help hundreds of displaced individuals and families access the services that they need to successfully resettle in Oregon. SB 718 makes permanent the extended case management (ECM), employment and other supportive programming established nearly unanimously by the Legislature in 2019, and through further investment expands it statewide so every newly arrived refugee can thrive.

Refugees are Oregonians. Refugees are resilient and bring immense contributions to the economy, diversity, and social fabric of the state. This \$4.3m investment is important because it would **expand access** to these new Oregonians in greater Portland, Salem, Lane County and Ontario, including the Oregonians we serve at **Salem For Refugees**.

SB 718 is a smart investment for Oregon. Studies have shown that with proper support and case management, refugees are generally employed within six months and bring immense contributions to the economy, diversity, and social fabric of the state. When refugees are better equipped with support services and ECM, crisis situations are less common, thus saving taxpayer money going toward emergency responses, emergency room visits and public assistance.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill, we hope to see it passed this session to renew protections for these essential services.

With gratitude,

Anya Holcomb  
Co-Director  
Salem for Refugees