



March 16, 2023

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber and Members of the Committee,

My name is Britt Conroy, and I serve as public policy director of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Working with over 100 congregations, organizations, and interfaith partners, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) strives to bring about a more peaceful, just, sustainable, and compassionate Oregon community. We proudly welcome refugees and immigrants to Oregon as a service provider and advocacy organization.

Refugees, immigrants and other newcomer students arriving to Oregon often are confronted with language barriers, cultural differences, and a lack of support. Case management services supported by the Oregon Legislature have increase community members' access to employment, health care, affordable housing, transportation, support groups, student and parent engagement in school and life skills training.

EMO strongly supports SB 940, which builds upon this commitment to our refugee and immigrant communities by requiring the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to identify how Oregon high schools can ensure that refugees, immigrants and other newcomer students successfully transfer high school credits earned outside United States. This bill is backed by the International Rescue Committee, Refugees International, Church World Service and organizations here in Oregon that serve and advocate alongside Oregonians who are refugees and immigrants.

Too often, our newcomer students are unfairly denied credit for classes taken outside the U.S. simply because our high schools lack country-specific templates of transcripts, or the capacity to otherwise accurately convert material learned in other countries to Oregon's credit system. Students must remain in school longer than needed to complete their diploma, or they drop out, frustrated and wronged. ODE already is committing resources to accurately translate transcripts from institutions in Mexico, and solutions from other states offer a path forward.

SB 940 is inspired by similar legislation in Utah, where lawmakers created an international transcript repository to ensure accurate transcript translation, reduce administrative burden and guarantee students receive credit for courses completed in other countries.

EMO and our partners urge the Committee to support SB 940 and to advance other legislative and executive branch efforts aimed at boosting the academic achievement, graduation rate and sense of belonging of Oregon's newcomer students. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Britt Conroy, Public Policy Director, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon