

April 1, 2025

Senator Prozanski, Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

## **Re: Support for House Bill SB 149**

Dear Chair Prozanski, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Multnomah County Department of County Human Services, I strongly urge you to pass SB 149. This bill is intended to provide a real investment in building a robust and compassionate support system for newly arrived immigrants, particularly critical in a time when national policies create insecurity, uncertainty, and fear. Oregon, as a sanctuary state, has the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to welcoming immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who have consistently contributed to our state's growth and vitality. This bill not only helps newly arriving Oregonians, but the entire State as a whole.

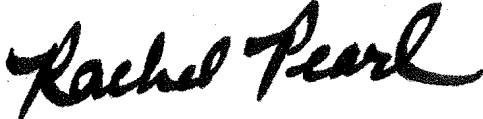
Multnomah County's Department of County Human Services believes that every person, at every stage of life, will have equitable opportunities to thrive. We have shown that we can work together to ensure that ALL communities thrive. The Oregon's New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act is the result of state and local government agencies, culturally specific Community Based Organizations, mutual aid groups, and refugee resettlement agencies working together to support our new neighbors. Each of the key partners are critical to this conversation and to the end result of how these funds are distributed. This bill was created with the commitment to the advancement of all communities and it is so important that we honor that commitment.

As SB 149 moves forward, it will be critical to provide funding to the full spectrum of services needed to support immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the State of Oregon. Over the last year, Multnomah County's Department of County Human Services has been providing emergency housing and transitions to permanent housing for families with children who had just arrived in Oregon. This work has been in partnership with The Portland Immigrant Rights Coalition (PIRC) and the Asylum Seeker Solidarity Collective (ASSC) and has created a clear process to connect families with children to resources that prevent unsheltered homelessness in their first few months. What we have learned from this experience is that it is not only critical to fund refugee resettlement agencies, but also the community based organizations that have experience providing case management and housing navigation to families who don't qualify for refugee resettlement services.

The State needs to fund organizations with housing experience who can help families get support quickly and remove barriers efficiently. Without funding these organizations, the system falls apart. We need the State to support these efforts and provide funding that stabilizes and invests in what we know works. We cannot afford to have families who have just arrived in Oregon fall through the cracks and sleep in tents with their young children. While we continue to invest in overall family shelter expansion, we need to prioritize funding for housing and case management for these families who don't meet the criteria to be served by resettlement agencies. Funding the CBO programs who do this work is critical so these families can also have the opportunity to thrive, become established and begin contributing to the community they are now living in.

The foundation for a system that meets the needs of newly arriving families in Oregon has been set. We need your support to fully fund SB 149 so we can build upon that foundation and create a sustainable pathway for a future that supports all families of Oregon and moves us forward together.

Thank you,



Rachel Pearl  
Deputy Director  
Department of County Human Services  
Multnomah County