



**IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION**
BUILDING NEW BEGINNINGS

*10301 NE Glisan Street
Portland, Oregon 97220
www.irco.org*

MAIN OFFICE

AFRICA HOUSE

EASTERN OREGON

**GREATER MIDDLE EAST
CENTER**

**PACIFIC ISLANDER &
ASIAN FAMILY CENTER**

**SLAVIC AND EASTERN
EUROPEAN CENTER**

Re: HB 5011

March 27, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg and members of the Joint Subcommittee,

Since 2021, the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization ("IRCO") and local housing partners have worked with Oregon Housing and Community Services ("OHCS") to provide vital services to immigrant, refugee, and BIPOC communities to respond to increasing housing costs in Oregon. OHCS funding has bolstered IRCO's comprehensive wraparound programming providing trauma informed "No Wrong Door" housing services as a part of our mission to welcome, serve, and empower refugees, immigrants, and people across cultures and generations to reach their full potential.

Through vital OHCS program funds, IRCO has served barriered families and community members across the Portland metro area and Baker and Malheur counties. With OHCS support, IRCO has provided nearly \$3.58 million in client assistance (e.g., rent, utilities, household supplies, groceries, hygiene supplies), increased housing options locally through capacity building funding for several affordable housing development projects with local housing partners, and increased IRCO Permanent Supportive Housing programming's capacity to serve 172 clients in trauma-informed intensive case management and resource navigation services over the past year alone.

IRCO's OHCS funded services have been particularly crucial in supporting underserved and under resourced households in Eastern Oregon. Nearly 20% of Malheur County lives in poverty with 1 in 4 residents receiving public food benefits. Through OHCS, IRCO Eastern Oregon office has provided \$367,543 in qualified client assistance to stabilize housing, provide rental assistance, support payment of overdue utility bills, and connect families to critical food supports and other basic needs.

One such household was a young Ukrainian refugee family newly arrived in Oregon fleeing the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. The family required a wide range of supports including mental health, immigration, domestic violence/survivor services, and housing.

The couple came to Portland with their young son and experienced houselessness, living in their car at times. The family was referred to IRCO's Slavic & Eastern European Center ("SEEC"), and through SEEC's culturally specific case management and rental assistance the family entered stable, long-term housing, connected to critical health/behavioral health services, and supported with client assistance funds. These funds provided significant ongoing support for the family as IRCO caseworkers continue to manage their housing supports, while also balancing connecting the family to wraparound mental health counseling, domestic violence interventions, ongoing immigration needs, preschool enrollment, and adult English classes.

This family and many others are examples of the critical services that are being provided by IRCO through these OHCS funds. These funds are an essential component of IRCO's anti-poverty and stability programming, demonstrating that culturally specific services, housing assistance, and affordable housing options are needed now more than ever.

We hope this important context supports the committee's decision going forward—knowing that without such investment—communities will lack the wraparound supportive services needed to have a new start.

Sincerely,

Sokho Eath

IRCO Government Relations Director
Pacific Islander & Asian Family Center Director

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