



**ECUMENICAL  
MINISTRIES**  
— OF OREGON —

Media Release  
For Immediate Release  
Date: March 5, 2025  
Contact: Frances King, (503) 985-8708,  
fking@emoregon.org

**Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon calls on the Oregon Legislature to pass legislation supporting the Ukrainian community in Oregon**

March 5, 2025, Portland, Ore.—Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) supports the Oregon Ukrainian community by providing Ukrainian refugees with immigration legal assistance and ongoing support to Ukrainian victims of domestic and sexual violence. We stand with the Ukrainian community in Oregon and call on the Oregon Senate to pass the following bills: SCR 23 to designate Cherkasy Oblast, Ukraine, as Oregon’s official sister state; SB 703 to fund grants for non-profit immigration legal service providers to provide free or reduced-cost legal services; and SB 149 to create the Oregon New Neighbors Coordinated Access Act to form a long-term support structure for refugees and asylum seekers.

Since May 2022, SOAR Immigration Legal Services, a program of EMO, has helped over 300 Ukrainians to apply and reapply for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). SOAR Legal has also processed over 800 applications for work permits for Ukrainian humanitarian entrants who came to Oregon through the Uniting for Ukraine (U4U) Program.

Through the course of this project, SOAR Legal has held legal clinics in Bend, Medford, Salem and the Portland metro area, to make immigration legal services accessible to the Ukrainian community. In addition to providing direct legal services, SOAR Legal also provides informational outreach to ensure Ukrainian humanitarian entrants know that they must affirmative file for an immigration remedy if they entered through the U4U program, and informing them of what immigration pathways may be available.

This important work to keep vulnerable individuals and families safe in Oregon is under threat because of recent proposed changes to the immigration system, as well as decreased and limited access to funding. Support for programs like SOAR Immigration Legal Services’ legal clinics is crucial to support the well-being and safety of Ukrainians fleeing violence in their home country and seeking to rebuild a life in Oregon. Bills like SB 703 would help to continue this crucial work.

Slavic Oregon Social Services (SOSS), another program of EMO, serves victims of domestic and sexual violence in Slavic communities in Oregon. Since the invasion in 2022, SOSS has launched

specific initiatives to support the Ukrainian community in Oregon, and has served over 100 individuals, addressing their immediate and long-term needs. In addition to making sure that several staff members speak Ukrainian, the SOSS website and materials are translated into Ukrainian as is a Ukrainian specific social media page. SOSS established ESL classes to help newcomers adapt, assisted dozens of families with securing housing, and currently provides aid with utility costs. To foster social connection and emotional well-being, SOSS organizes support groups and game nights, creating a sense of belonging for displaced Ukrainians. Additionally, SOSS actively participates in resource fairs, collaborates with non-profits assisting Ukrainians, and engages in outreach and resource exchange to maximize community support.

Programs like SOAR Legal and SOSS are crucial for the well-being and safety of nearly 10,000 Ukrainians in Oregon fleeing war and violence. The proposed bills to increase international cooperation and support immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers of all nationalities are key to supporting the thousands of Ukrainians who have made Oregon their new home. Interested individuals, organizations and elected officials can contact EMO ([www.emoregon.org](http://www.emoregon.org)) for more information on how to support these programs and bills aimed at building long-term relationships with Ukraine, supporting vulnerable Ukrainian Oregonians, and ensuring our immigration system is accessible and fair to all.

*Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of faith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through direct service programs, education and dialogue, creation justice, and public policy advocacy.*

###