

# News Release

**Date:** Dec. 13, 2021

**Contact:** Jake Sunderland, [Jake.Sunderland@dhsosha.state.or.us](mailto:Jake.Sunderland@dhsosha.state.or.us)

## Legislature approves \$18 million funding package for refugee resettlement and support

---

### Need to know

- Oregon has committed to resettling 1,200 Afghan arrivals, but existing federal funding does not provide adequate support for these efforts.
- The Oregon Legislature has approved \$18 million in funding to support emergency and ongoing refugee resettlement activities.
- The funding package addresses gaps in federal funding that would have made it difficult for the state to meet immediate resettlement needs of Afghan arrivals.

(Salem) – During the December special session, the Oregon Legislature approved \$18 million in funding for Afghan refugee resettlement efforts. This funding will help provide Afghan individuals and families resettling in Oregon with housing, education, legal aid, job training and other culturally responsive services.

The Oregon Department of Human Services' (ODHS) Refugee Program administers federally funded cash and medical supports to refugees and individuals with eligible immigration statuses, and contracts with Resettlement Agencies (RAs) to provide initial resettlement services.

The United States is currently coordinating the relocation of more than 70,000 people following their evacuation from Afghanistan. Afghan families began arriving in Oregon this fall, and the number of arrivals will increase in the coming months. Oregon has committed to resettling 1,200 Afghan arrivals, but existing federal funding does not provide adequate support for these efforts. This newly approved funding will address critical resource gaps in the state's resettlement plan.

Refugee resettlement activities declined during the previous administration due to lower annual refugee admissions, which in turn prompted a drawback of resources. The Biden Administration has since increased the number of refugees permitted to

enter the United States, but funding and capacity have remained major issues. Senator Kayse Jama (D-Portland) and Representative Khanh Pham (D-Portland) have called for a compassionate response to evacuated Afghan allies, urging the state to address the gaps and create a strong foundation for refugees' future in Oregon.

“We know that Afghan families and individuals coming to Oregon have experienced trauma,” said ODHS Director Fariborz Pakseresht. “We must be mindful that Afghan arrivals have left behind friends, family, cherished homes and established businesses to start a new life. They will become our neighbors, coworkers and productive members of our communities. We owe it to them to make their first days, weeks and months in Oregon as stress-free as possible, connecting them to quality and easy-to-navigate resources, from meals to jobs supports to connections with faith-based organizations.”

The approved \$18 million in funding will enable the department to meet the immediate needs of Afghan arrivals while building back much-needed refugee resettlement infrastructure to accommodate the increase in arrivals from around the world. Funding includes allocations for the following:

- Short-term housing and food assistance
- Long-term housing assistance
- Case management and community-based outreach and support
- Legal services to seek permanent immigration status

“The state of Oregon has really stepped up to meet the needs of individuals and families from Afghanistan,” said Claire Seguin, deputy director of ODHS Self-Sufficiency Programs and the state’s refugee coordinator. “We began this year with three partner resettlement agencies, and now we have five. The level of commitment and the outpouring of community support has been astounding, in addition to the refugee support network that already existed. This funding, paired with so much thoughtful planning, allows us to channel that commitment into real supports for Afghan arrivals.”

The state’s Refugee Program assists refugees and individuals with qualifying immigration statuses. The program partners with Oregon’s five local refugee resettlement agencies (Catholic Charities, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees, Salem for Refugees, and the Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization) and other community partners to provide

services. Statewide coordination of services and resources is provided by program staff. Learn more at:

<https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/assistance/refugee/pages/index.aspx>

###