



April 14, 2021

Dear members of the Colorado General Assembly,

As a 75-year old humanitarian organization representing 37 Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox communions and 24 refugee resettlement offices across 17 states, Church World Service writes in support of [HB 21-1150](#), which would create the Colorado Office of New Americans (ONA) within the Department of Labor and Employment where state programs, initiatives, and policies focused on immigrants and refugees are housed.

As Leviticus reminds us: “Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.”

As a resettlement agency and a faith-based organization, we have witnessed firsthand the ways in which immigrants and refugees contribute to our community. [HB 21-1150](#) is a critical step toward promoting inclusivity and the successful economic, social, linguistic, and cultural integration of immigrants who call Colorado home. It will drive statewide efforts to promote integration and offer support to community-based organizations, state agencies, the business community, and other stakeholders as they work with Colorado’s diverse immigrant community.

Immigrants and refugees are beloved members of our communities and vital to their prosperity. Colorado is home to more than [500,000 immigrants](#), including refugees, who make up nearly 10% of our state’s population. These individuals play a critical role in our state’s cultural fabric and economic prosperity. In [2018 alone](#), immigrant-led households in Colorado paid \$1.5 billion in state and local taxes and had combined spending power, after tax-income, of more than \$14 billion. We recognize the valuable contributions they [bring to Colorado](#), and this bill will further that legacy and engender our core values of generosity, hospitality, and welcome.

An Office of New Americans is an opportunity to create a more equitable state where all Coloradans have the opportunity to realize their full potential. In 2019, Colorado launched its [New American Integration Initiative](#). It was a vital first step to coordinate efforts to identify and address issues relating to immigration integration. The Office of New Americans is the logical and necessary next step to continue this work and help build back a stronger and more equitable Colorado.

We are proud that our state has a reputation of providing help to refugees and immigrants. We urge you to find compassion in your discernment process and pass HB 21-1150. It is imperative to demonstrate moral leadership around the imperative to love our neighbor, welcome the immigrant, and care for the most vulnerable among us.

Sincerely,

Meredith Owen

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