

November 6, 2023

The Honorable Benjamin Chipman, State Senator
The Honorable Jill Duson, State Senator
The Honorable Rachel Talbot Ross, Speaker of the House, Maine State Legislature
The Honorable Michael F. Brennan, State Representative
The Honorable Benjamin T. Collings, State Representative
The Honorable Edward W. Crockett, State Representative
The Honorable Grayson B. Lookner, State Representative
The Honorable Matt Moonen, State Representative
The Honorable Charles A. Skold, State Representative
The Honorable Samuel Lewis Zager, State Representative

Re: Request for funding support for City of Portland Resettlement Program

Dear Senators and Representatives:

At the end of this year, federal funding that fully supports the City of Portland Resettlement Program will end. On behalf of the City of Portland, I am writing to request your assistance in identifying State or Federal funding to continue this vital program, which addresses the critical and basic needs of thousands of asylum seekers annually.

This program depends on funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) to operate. Unfortunately, effective December 31, 2023, this program will be replaced with one that restricts funding to services provided within just 45 days of noncitizen migrants' arrival in the United States. While this funding will continue to be an important resource for border communities (or "pass-through" cities) in which asylum seekers stay for shorter periods of time, it will be inaccessible to "destination" cities like Portland, which provide longer-term support and services.

The Resettlement Program has successfully assisted nearly 1,300 asylum-seeking families (or approximately 4,200 individuals) since January 2020. . Program staff work out of multiple shelter sites to evaluate the needs of new arrivals and connect them with appropriate community providers. In addition, the casework services provided by our team include:

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- Access to health care services
 - Access to perinatal care
 - Access to women's health services
 - Food access
 - Enrolling children in school and programs
 - Immigration and legal support
 - Community and cultural integration
 - Access to public transportation
 - Translation/interpretation
 - Access to postal mail services and mail interpretation
 - Parenting groups, men's groups, and support groups
 - Assistance with permanent housing placements

Without this program and as the steady pace of arrivals continues, traditional healthcare systems, social services providers, and community programs will be challenged to meet the increase in need.

Although the Resettlement Program's FEMA-funded budget is \$1.16 million, City of Portland staff believe that the Program could continue its most vital work with an annual budget of \$700,000. To date, we have not been successful in identifying and securing alternative funding sources. Respectfully, we ask for your help in securing state or federal funding to ensure that asylum seekers have the skills, resources, and services they need to thrive.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact Portland City Manager Danielle West (citymanager@portlandmaine.gov) with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,



Kate Snyder, Mayor

cc: The Honorable Susan Collins, United States Senate
The Honorable Angus King, United States Senate
The Honorable Chellie Pingree, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Jared Golden, United States House of Representatives