

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 01, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC

The Honorable Deanne Criswell  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Administrator Criswell,

We write to urge you to immediately allocate Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Shelter and Services Program (SSP) funding to Massachusetts, as well as other states that are in desperate need of federal support to welcome new arrivals.

Despite our effort to provide sufficient funding for the SSP, Republicans in Congress fought to negate any funding for the program, and the recently passed Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 provides FEMA with only \$650 million in funding for the SSP program. This funding, while important relief, will be insufficient to address the full scale of the financial crisis faced by cities and states across the country. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts alone anticipates spending \$900 million on its Emergency Shelter System in FY2025,<sup>1</sup> a four-fold increase since Fiscal Year 2023.<sup>2</sup> As we continue to fight for additional resources, it is critical this SSP program funding is distributed expeditiously and equitably.

SSP funding will provide vital support for a humanitarian response to the unprecedented influx of newly arriving migrants into the Commonwealth. Over the past two years, families have been arriving in Massachusetts at a dramatic rate, which spiked in the second half of 2023. The last round of SSP funds allocated to Massachusetts was in August 2023 and was based, in part, on a formula that did not fully capture the exponential growth of new arrivals in Massachusetts in 2023. In June 2022, for example, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development was providing shelter in hotels for 19 families, but a year later was housing 882

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<sup>1</sup> WBUR, "Healey among 9 governors asking the federal government to act on immigration," Charles Lisinski, January 23, 2024, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2024/01/23/maura-healey-governor-letters-immigration-reform>.

<sup>2</sup> WBUR, "As need for emergency shelters in Mass. spikes, so do costs" Gabrielle Emanuel, October 02, 2023, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2023/10/02/massachusetts-family-shelter-finances>

families in hotels.<sup>3</sup> Today, nearly 100 towns and cities are providing 7,500 families a place to stay, which translates to more than 20,000 individuals in the state shelter system.<sup>4</sup> This rapid increase has placed significant strain on the shelter system and communities' existing resources.

Massachusetts is committed to welcoming immigrants with care and compassion. We are grateful that Governor Maura Healey, state legislators and officials, municipal leaders, nonprofits, residents, and faith-based organizations across our state have stepped up to provide housing, food, medical care, transportation, education, and other essential services to new arrivals, often on short notice. We are also grateful for DHS's efforts to speed up the review of new arrivals' work authorization requests through clinics in Massachusetts last fall that served 2,910 individuals and helped triple the number of migrants with work authorizations<sup>5</sup>. But the Commonwealth and municipalities cannot shoulder the serious financial costs of this humanitarian crisis alone.

Now is a critical moment to provide federal relief to Massachusetts as the Commonwealth continues its steadfast efforts to care for new arrivals and existing residents alike, as well as ensure the state's long-term financial stability. We urge you to expeditiously distribute SSP funding to state and local entities so that communities can continue to support their newest residents. Given the far-reaching extent of this need, we also ask you to provide ample funding to locations such as Massachusetts, which are experiencing particularly notable increases in new arrivals. As we stated in our letter on December 6, 2023, it is critical that FEMA take into account new migration trends to destination states and ensure the equitable distribution of SSP funds.<sup>6</sup>

We deeply appreciate FEMA's efforts to support our communities in this vital humanitarian work. We ask you to distribute as quickly as possible this new SSP funding provided by Congress and to ensure that Massachusetts receives an equitable share of funding that reflects the scale of the financial cost the Commonwealth is incurring.

To support FEMA's work and to get Massachusetts the support it needs, we will continue to advocate in Congress for increased funding for the Shelter and Services Program.

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<sup>3</sup> WGBH News, "'A perfect storm': Haitian refugees flow into an overburdened shelter system," Liz Neisloss, May 10, 2023, <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2023/05/10/a-perfect-storm-haitian-refugees-flow-into-an-overburdened-shelter-system>

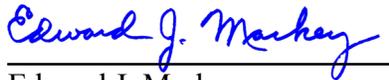
<sup>4</sup> Emergency Assistance Placement Data, provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/emergency-assistance-ea-family-shelter-resources-and-data#emergency-assistance-placement-data>

<sup>5</sup> Boston Globe, "Migrants with work permits in Mass. tripled in 2 weeks, Healey administration says," Samantha J. Gross, January 02, 2024, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2024/01/02/metro/migrant-crisis-budget-healey-shelter-emergency/>

<sup>6</sup> "Massachusetts delegation calls for additional federal support for migrant shelter and service programs," December 06, 2023, <https://www.markey.senate.gov/news/press-releases/massachusetts-delegation-calls-for-additional-federal-support-for-migrant-shelter-and-service-programs>.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



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Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress



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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



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Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress



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Katherine M. Clark  
Member of Congress



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Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



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Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

*William R. Keating*

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