



THE CITY OF NEW YORK

January 20, 2023

Hon. Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20006

RE: Federal Aid to New York City for Humanitarian Assistance to Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

Dear President Biden,

As New York City works mightily to help the United States Government meet its obligations to honor the rights of people to seek asylum, we, the undersigned New York City elected officials, urge your Administration to promptly provide federal aid to support the critical humanitarian assistance our city government has been providing to the tens of thousands of asylum seekers who have arrived here in recent months. We request this support both in the form of a significant share of the \$800 million in FEMA fund—which we are grateful that Congress allocated for this purpose in December, and through categorical grants made directly to affected municipalities. We also urge you to move expeditiously to grant work authorizations to recently-arrived asylum seekers, so that they can find employment, as so many of them are eager to do.

The right to flee persecution, and to seek asylum in another country, is a human right guaranteed under both international and U.S. law. Under those laws, guaranteeing that right is an obligation of the federal government. While New York City, as a city of immigrants that has thrived on the contributions of newcomers for more than 400 years, is proud to play a significant role in helping our nation meet that obligation, the costs of meeting this national obligation should be borne by the federal government.

Since last spring, New York City has welcomed approximately 40,000 asylum seekers, providing food, shelter, medical care, legal aid, and education. We are currently providing shelter to approximately 27,000 asylum seekers. The population in our shelters has risen nearly 40% from last year, with new arrivals now making up approximately one-third of New York City's shelter population. While historically, the average cost of providing shelter has run closer to \$200 per person per day, quickly standing up emergency shelters is far more expensive – and costing the City well over \$300 per day. We estimate that the total cost to provide shelter and services to new arrivals this year will reach over \$1 billion, with costs continuing to increase so long as migrants continue to arrive.

With the Statue of Liberty in our harbor, New York City has long been a destination for immigrants fleeing war and violence, seeking safety and opportunity. Unlike previous waves of immigration, the people arriving today enter the United States at a moment where our broken immigration system provides few pathways for legal migration or work authorization. New York City has made historic investments in providing free legal services to immigrants, spending \$67 million in 2022 alone. While

this legal aid has been critical to assisting eligible immigrants and asylum seekers obtain the legal authorization they need to remain in country, bureaucratic delays within the Immigration and Customs Enforcement have caused an immense backlog in New York City immigration courts with over 124,000 cases pending as of December 2022. As a result, the legal process may take years.

Because those arriving here today are not legally able to work, they are denied the ability to provide for themselves and their families, increasing their need for shelter and services. So many of the individuals who are currently in our shelter system are eager to work, and there are many employment opportunities in our city. We strongly encourage your Administration to expand its Temporary Protected Status program and increase the number of work permits for migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Senegal, and Venezuela as we have rightly done for those from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

We recognize, of course, that other states and localities are currently and must continue to provide shelter and services to asylum seekers, and that they require and deserve federal resources to cover those expenses, just as we do. We are not seeking more than our city's appropriate allocation. And even with federal resources to cover the cost, the work of identifying tens of thousands of places of shelter in a city with a tremendously tight housing market, and scaling up the services and support to meet the need, is a tremendous undertaking. We are simply asking that we, like other jurisdictions, receive federal support as we do the important work to help our country meet our national obligation.

As in past generations, immigrants contribute mightily to the dynamism and economic fabric of both New York City and the United States. Your Administration must step up now to help. We urge you, Mr. President, to uphold the United States' obligation to provide a safe haven for those seeking refuge, and we look forward to working with you to do so.


Sincerely,



Brad Lander  
New York City Comptroller



Jumaane D. Williams  
New York City Public Advocate



Vanessa L. Gibson  
Bronx Borough President



Mark Levine  
Manhattan Borough President



Antonio Reynoso  
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New York City Council Member, District 21

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New York City Council Member, District 22

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New York City Council Member, District 25



Julie Won  
New York City Council Member, District 26



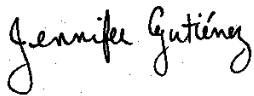
Nantasha Williams  
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Shahana Hanif  
New York City Council Member, District 39  
Chair, Committee on Immigration



Rita Joseph  
New York City Council Member, District 40



Kamillah Hanks  
New York City Council Member, District 49

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CC: Deanne Criswell, Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator