

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 13, 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 in strong support of Massachusetts' latest FY 2024 application for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Shelter and Services Program¹ (SSP) funding.

Today, Massachusetts applied for \$34.5 million in SSP funding to provide new arrivals in the state with shelter and related humanitarian services. SSP funding is urgently needed in Massachusetts.² Currently, 7,377 families live in the state's shelters — almost double the shelter population as of March 2023.³ Just over half of those families are new arrivals to the United States.⁴ The only state in the country with a “right to shelter” law, Massachusetts has struggled to house every family in need of shelter, and nearly 800 families are on a waiting list.⁵ With shelter facilities at capacity, families have been forced to sleep outdoors and in cars, in a state with below-freezing temperatures for months of the year.⁶ Some have turned to airport lobbies and hospital emergency rooms for makeshift shelter.⁷ The Commonwealth is now running out of shelter funding and faces a shortfall in its shelter budget for the upcoming fiscal year.⁸

¹ Federal Emergency Management Agency, “Shelter and Services Program,” <https://www.fema.gov/grants/shelter-services-program>.

² Politico, “Migrant funding’s a marathon, not a sprint,” Lisa Kashinsky and Kelly Garrity, April 15, 2024, <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/massachusetts-playbook/2024/04/15/migrant-fundings-a-marathon-not-a-sprint-00152186>.

³ Commonwealth of Massachusetts, “Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter Resources and Data,” last updated June 13, 2024, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/emergency-assistance-ea-family-shelter-resources-and-data>; NBC News, “Massachusetts places historic limit on families seeking homeless shelter,” Kyla Guilfoil, May 1, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/massachusetts-places-historic-limit-families-seeking-homeless-shelter-rcna150190>.

⁴ NBC News, “Massachusetts places historic limit on families seeking homeless shelter,” Kyla Guilfoil, May 1, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/massachusetts-places-historic-limit-families-seeking-homeless-shelter-rcna150190>.

⁵ WWLP, “Number of families on emergency housing waitlist in Massachusetts,” Ashley Shook, May 21, 2024, <https://www.wwlp.com/news/state-politics/number-of-families-on-emergency-housing-waitlist-in-massachusetts/>.

⁶ WBUR, “‘Beyond terrible’: With overflow shelters full, families huddle in cars and at Logan,” Gabrielle Emanuel, January 24, 2024, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2024/01/24/homeless-family-waitlist-overflow>.

⁷ *Id.*; Mass Live, “Mass. migrants still sleeping at Boston Logan as state begs for funds, seeks sites,” Irene Rotondo, updated March 11, 2024, <https://www.masslive.com/boston/2024/03/mass-migrants-still-sleeping-at-boston-logan-as-state-begs-for-funds-seeks-sites.html>; CBS News, “Boston Medical Center inundated with migrants from Haiti,” Christina Hager, May 2, 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/boston/news/dozens-of-haitian-migrants-flood-boston-medical-center/>.

We recognize that the total pool of SSP funding is inadequate. We fought to secure SSP funding for the Commonwealth, pushing Congress to appropriate sufficient SSP funding,⁹ and urging FEMA to allocate a fair share to Massachusetts.¹⁰ Ultimately, Congress appropriated \$650 million for SSP, successfully defeating House Republicans' demands to defund SSP altogether.¹¹ But this is less than the \$800 million appropriated last year — and significantly less than the \$1.4 billion that President Biden requested, or the billions that we and local leaders around the country have called for.¹² Of that \$650 million in SSP funding, FEMA has already allocated \$275 million to states, and will now award \$340.9 million in SSP-C funding through a competitive process (with millions more still in reserve).¹³

While we continue to advocate for more funding, it is important to note that the SSP funding that Massachusetts has received to date has been a lifeline for the state's shelters, but has not come close to meeting the Commonwealth's needs. This year, Massachusetts was allocated nearly \$7

⁸ WBUR, "Mass. senate budget chief warns emergency shelter system could run out of money Monday," Walter Wuthmann, April 11, 2014, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2024/04/11/boston-mass-senate-budget-shelter-money>; WBUR, "House budget plan spends big on the T, funds shelter system at half of expected cost," Tiziana Dearing, Walter Wuthmann and Rob Lane, April 11, 2024, <https://www.wbur.org/radioboston/2024/04/11/budget-spending-massachusetts-mbta-shelter-system>.

⁹ *See, e.g.*, Letter from Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey to Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Patty Murray and Vice Chair Susan Collins, February 21, 2024, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2024.02.21%20SSP%20letter%20to%20Approps.pdf>; Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren, "Warren, Padilla, Senators Push Funding Increase for FEMA's Shelter and Services Program," press release, February 12, 2024, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warren-padilla-senators-push-funding-increase-for-femas-shelter-and-services-program>.

¹⁰ Letter from Senator Edward Markey, et al., to Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell, April 1, 2024, https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ma_shelter_services_program_4124.pdf; Letter from Representative Lori Trahan, et al., to Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell, December 6, 2023, https://trahan.house.gov/uploadedfiles/signed_-_madel_letter_to_sec._mayorkas.pdf.

¹¹ Heritage Foundation, "The Biden Administration Wants Even More Money to Distribute Illegal Aliens Throughout the United States," Matthew Kuckelman, March 15, 2024, <https://www.heritage.org/immigration/report/the-biden-administration-wants-even-more-money-distribute-illegal-aliens>; Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, H. R. 4367, <https://www.congress.gov/118/bills/hr4367/BILLS-118hr4367rh.pdf>; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): Fiscal Year 2024 Shelter and Services Program - Competitive (SSP-C)," p. 6, https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_gpd_ssp-c-nofo_fy24.pdf.

¹² U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Supplemental Funding Request," October 20, 2023, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/10/20/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-supplemental-funding-request>; Letter from Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson, et al., to President Joseph R. Biden, October 28, 2023, https://denvergov.org/files/assets/public/v/1/mayor/documents/mayors-letter-to-biden-congressional-leadership_oct2023.pdf; Letter from Representative Lori Trahan, et al., to House Subcommittee on Homeland Security Chair David Joyce and Ranking Member Henry Cuellar, March 11, 2024, https://trahan.house.gov/uploadedfiles/final_fy24_increased_ssp_letter.pdf; Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren, "Warren, Padilla, Senators Push Funding Increase for FEMA's Shelter and Services Program," press release, February 12, 2024, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warren-padilla-senators-push-funding-increase-for-femas-shelter-and-services-program>; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Shelter and Services Program (SSP): Fiscal Year 2023," October 18, 2023, p. 2, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/2023_1018_fema_shelter_and_services_program_fy23.pdf.

¹³ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): Fiscal Year 2024 Shelter and Services Program - Competitive (SSP-C)," p. 6, https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_gpd_ssp-c-nofo_fy24.pdf.

million of the allocated SSP grant funds (SSP-A).¹⁴ While this is more than triple the \$1.9 million the Commonwealth received in 2023, it hardly makes a dent in the over \$900 million that the Commonwealth expects to spend on shelter in the upcoming fiscal year.¹⁵

We thus urge FEMA to fulfill the Commonwealth's entire request for \$34.5 million from the pool of competitive SSP grant funds. Additional SSP funding is critical to ensure that Massachusetts receives an equitable share of funding that reflects the financial costs the Commonwealth is incurring. Meanwhile, we will continue to fight for additional federal funding for communities hosting new arrivals.

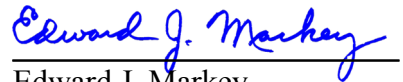
As the Commonwealth stands by its values and continues to welcome new arrivals, the state needs more federal funding to respond to a national trend of increased immigration.¹⁶ We thus ask you to promptly approve Massachusetts' application for \$34.5 million in SSP-C funding.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



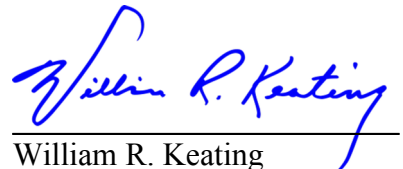
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): Fiscal Year 2024 Shelter and Services Program - Allocated (SSP-A)," p. 8, https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_gpd_ssp-a-nofo_fy24.pdf.

¹⁵ Politico, "Migrant funding's a marathon, not a sprint," Lisa Kashinsky and Kelly Garrity, April 15, 2024, <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/massachusetts-playbook/2024/04/15/migrant-fundings-a-marathon-not-a-sprint-00152186>; NBC10 Boston, "Exit rates at emergency shelters show slight improvement amid capacity challenges," Kathy Curran, June 10, 2024, <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/massachusetts-emergency-shelter-exit-rates/3395527/>; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Shelter and Services Program (SSP): Fiscal Year 2023," October 18, 2023, p. 10, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/2023_1018_fema_shelter_and_services_program_fy23.pdf.

¹⁶ Pew Research Center, "Migrant encounters at the U.S.-Mexico border hit a record high at the end of 2023," John Gramlich, February 15, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/02/15/migrant-encounters-at-the-us-mexico-border-hit-a-record-high-at-the-end-of-2023/>.



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Member of Congress



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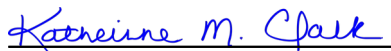
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