

October 23, 2023

Dear President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Secretary Mayorkas,

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, represent thousands of people from non-profit, business, public agencies, municipalities, and philanthropic organizations across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We write to you as our state welcomes an increasing number of migrant and refugee individuals and families. The situation has prompted a number of urgent needs from expedited work authorizations to safe housing so that our new neighbors can achieve a sense of stability, the ability to provide for themselves and their families, and the opportunity to contribute to their new home communities.

More than 90 of our 351 cities and towns are hosting more than 7,080 families in our shelter system, including pregnant people and young children. Nearly half of these families are new arrivals. They are living in emergency shelters, and more than 3,300 families are currently residing in hotels and motels. Governor Maura Healey's administration has declared a state of emergency in order to address these families' urgent needs in as immediate and comprehensive a manner as possible. However, there are supportive measures that require federal assistance, and we urge your Administration to take all necessary action.

In the most immediate term, there are three measures on which we seek federally supportive action:

- **Expedited work authorizations:** Many recent arrivals are eligible for work authorizations, but permission to work has faced bureaucratic delays. These delays have forced recent arrivals to rely more heavily on social safety nets. Addressing these delays will empower more work-eligible newcomers to become more self-sufficient sooner, reducing reliance on public resources.
- **Congregate shelter sites:** Although Massachusetts has been adding shelter and motel units regularly, extraordinary measures are needed to keep up with demand as necessitated by the number of arrivals. The state needs our federal government to take immediate action on this front. Specifically, identifying federal properties that can be used as congregate shelter sites could greatly assist in state efforts to keep recent arrivals housed.
- **Federal funding for additional needs:** The influx of new arrivals has generated a broad swath of needs, especially with the number of children and pregnant people. In addition to immediate emergency needs like housing and food, there are a variety of supports required from healthcare and education to concrete items like diapers, baby formula, and clothing. Funding and related resources are desperately needed to stave off what could become an ever-spiraling crisis.

Massachusetts has always been a welcoming haven for those in need. We must ensure that our Commonwealth continues to live up to our highest ideals amid this current situation. We hope we can count on your Administration to help meet these specific urgent needs. Please heed the call.

Sincerely,

***Working Group to Protect Migrant Families, Coordinating Committee:***

Peggy Shukur, Deputy Director, Anti-Defamation League

Dr. Geralde Gabeau, Executive Director, IFSI-USA

Carlot Ducasse Celestin, Mental Health Counselor, IFSI-USA

Lawrence Bailis, Board Chair, Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA)  
Cindy Rowe, President & CEO, Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA)  
Jeremy Burton, Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston  
Lino Covarrubias, CEO, Jewish Family Service of Metrowest  
Kelly Turley, Associate Director, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless  
Marc Draisen, Executive Director, Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Dieufort J. Fleurissant, True Alliance Center Inc.

***Co-Signers:***

Paul Bockelman, Town Manager, Town of Amherst  
William Reichelt, Mayor, Town of West Springfield  
Nicole LaChapelle, Mayor, City of Easthampton  
Gina-Louise Sciarra, Mayor, City of Northampton  
Mayor Katjana Ballantyne, Mayor, City of Somerville  
Rachel H. Monarrez, Superintendent of Schools, Worcester Public Schools  
Cliff Chuang, Superintendent, Bedford Public Schools  
Dan Brosgol, Bedford School Committee  
Katherine Wong, Youth and Young Adult Homeless Project Manager, City of Springfield Office of Housing  
Jessica Tang, President, Boston Teachers Union  
Kathy Brown, Executive Director, Boston Tenant Coalition  
Greg Reibman, President & CEO, Charles River Regional Chamber  
Stephanie Sullivan, CEO, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program  
Alison LeBlanc, Executive Director, Child Health Equity Center  
Kathryn Buckley-Brawner, Executive Director, Catholic Charities Agency  
Lisa Guisbond, Executive Director, Citizens for Public Schools  
Kate-Marie Roycroft, CEO, The Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs  
Keith A. Mahoney, Vice President for Communications and Public Affairs, The Boston Foundation  
Leah Bradley, Chief Executive Officer, Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, Inc.  
David Gibbs, Executive Director, Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc.  
Andrew Morehouse, Executive Director, Food Bank of Western Massachusetts  
Isabel M. Pérez, Executive Director, Framingham Community Connections  
Jeff Thielman, President & Chief Executive Officer, International Institute of New England  
Michael Sroczynski, Senior Vice President, Government Advocacy and General Counsel, Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association  
Rabbi James Greene, Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts  
Jessica Andors, Executive Director, Lawrence CommunityWorks  
Leran Minc, Assistant Director of Policy, Project Bread-The Walk for Hunger  
Kerry A. Costello, President, League of Women Voters of Boston  
Suzanne Brock, Legislative Chair, League of Women Voters of Cape Cod  
Amy Cooper, Immigration Specialist, LWVMA Legislative Action Committee, League of Women Voters of Massachusetts  
Mary Utt, Co-President, League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area  
Kimberly Foley, League of Women Voters of Winchester  
Tanya Neslusan, Executive Director, Mass Equality  
Maria Rios, Director of Equity and Community Health Policy, Mass General Brigham  
Anna Krieger, Executive Director, Massachusetts Advocates for Children  
Chelsea Sedani, Advocacy Director, Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (MassBudget)  
Michelle Haimowitz, Executive Director, Massachusetts Head Start Association  
Georgia D. Katsoulomitis, Executive Director, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Jillian Harvey, President, Mystic Valley Area NAACP  
Tamara Small, CEO, NAIOP Massachusetts, The Commercial Real Estate Development Association  
Vick Mohanka, Acting Chapter Director, Sierra Club Massachusetts  
Christi Staples, Vice President, Policy and Government Relations, United Way of Massachusetts Bay  
Pamela Schwartz, Director, Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness  
Alexis Breiteneicher, Executive Director, Valley Community Development  
Mukesh Baral, Co-Founder, Advocacy for Refugee and Immigrant Services for Empowerment (ARISE)  
Regina Engel, Finance and Operations Director, African Community Education  
Beth Kontos, President, American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts  
Kevin Noonan, President, Amherst Shelter Inc. — El Colibrí  
Douglas J. Barth, volunteer, Amnesty International  
Flor Cabrera, Amnesty International Group 15  
Miguel F. Cabrera, Amnesty International Group 15  
Eneida Roman, President & CEO, Amplify LatinX  
Catherine Russo, Organizer, Art for the Border  
Aimee Mitchell, Chief Community Services Officer, Ascentria Community Services  
Carline Desire, Executive Director, Association of Haitian Women, Inc.  
Melissa Santiago, Community Relations Rep, Behavioral Health Helpline  
Christina Vallery, Boston Children's Hospital  
Sarah Hadge, Social Worker, Boston Children's Hospital  
Karen Losi, LCSW, Social Worker, Boston Children's Hospital  
Kirby Tang, LICSW, Boston Children's Hospital  
Kim Goldstein, Social Worker, Boston Children's Hospital  
Meghan Sullivan, Clinical Social Worker, Boston Children's Hospital  
Steven Coletti, LICSW, Clinical Social Worker, Boston Children's Hospital  
Danielle Sandage, Clinical Social Worker Manager, Boston Children's Hospital  
Kristen MacGlashing, Clinical Social Worker, Boston Children's Hospital  
Colleen Huysman, Clinical Social Worker, Boston Children's Hospital  
Eileen Roberta, LICSW, Boston Children's Hospital  
Devin Wolfe, MSW, LCSW, Clinical Social Worker, Boston Children's Hospital  
Roberta Falke, Boston Immigrant Justice Accompaniment Network  
Kathleen McTigue, Boston Immigration Justice Accompaniment Network  
Kevan L Hartshorn MD, Professor of Medicine, Boston University School of Medicine  
Heloisa Galvão, Executive Director, Brazilian Women's Group  
Lenita Reason, Executive Director, Brazilian Worker Center Inc  
Dr. Thomas Taaffe, Executive Director, Brick House Community Resource Center  
Patricia O'Connor, Leader, Brookfields Fight Fear  
Eric von Bleicken, Founder, Brookfields Fight Fear  
Susan Bowser, Building a Bigger Table  
Rachel Plummer, Associate Director, Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC)  
Betsy Smith, Coordinating Committee, Cape Cod Coalition for Safe Communities  
L. Michael Hager, Cape Cod Coalition for Safe Communities  
Carolyn Solomon, Cape Cod Safe Communities  
Marjean A. Perhot, Vice President, Refugee and Immigrant Services, Catholic Charities of Boston  
Kevin Whalen, Co-Director, CSIO, Center to Support Immigrant Organizing/Equity Now & Beyond  
Kenneth J. Laferriere, Treasurer, Charlton Democratic Town Committee  
Maisy Talbot, Social Work Intern, Children's Hospital  
Rev. Christophor Gilbert, Pastor, Christ Lutheran Church, Natick  
Karla Wood, Church of the Pilgrimage  
Norah Wylie, Jewish Vocational Services, Committee Member/Volunteer

Karen Frederick, Chief Executive Officer, Community Teamwork  
Patricia McMullin, Executive Director, Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals  
Roberta Unger, Congregation Beth El, Sudbury  
Janet Buchwald, Congregation Beth El, Sudbury  
Toba Spitzer, Rabbi, Congregation Dorshei Tzedek  
Tim Foley, 1199SEIU  
Maurice Boisvert, Consultant  
Tim McCarthy, Executive Director, Craig's Doors - A Home Association  
Hugh Silk MD MPH, Vice Chair of Community Health, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, UMass Chan Medical School  
Dan Sontag, Department of Mental Health  
Ann Lentini, Executive Director, Domus Incorporated  
Charlene Marlborough, Former Chair, Dudley Democratic Town Committee  
Seana R. Gaherin, Owner, Dunn Gaherins Inc.  
Jo Ann Borinski, Master Teacher, Edward Street  
Heather Gonzalez, Chair of Love and Justice in Action Team, Edwards Church  
Margaret Harrison, Edwards Church  
Ronda Yeomans, Member/Volunteer, Edwards Church UCC  
Rev. Heather Prince Doss, Pastor, Eliot Presbyterian Church  
Claudia Green, Executive Director, English for New Bostonians  
Hannah Hafter, Lead Organizer, Episcopal City Mission  
Rabbi Margie Klein Ronkin, Executive Director, Essex County Community Organization  
Oscar Guana Osorio, Operations Manager, Essex County Community Organization  
Julieth Cabral, Latin Community Organizer, Essex County Community Organization  
Elias Lieberman, Rabbi, Falmouth Jewish Congregation  
Chyree Heirs-Alexandre, Director of Operations, Family Health Center of Worcester  
Chanclaire Dennis, CHW Worker, Family Health Center.  
John Yazwinski, President & CEO, Father Bill's & MainSpring  
Rev. Annie L. Belmer, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Fitchburg  
Rev. Cynthia Worthington-Berry, Pastor, First Church Congregational Natick  
Sarah Marino, Office Manager, First Congregational Church in Winchester  
Sarallyn Keller, Director of Spiritual Vitality, First Congregational Church of Natick  
Cynthia Williams, Director of Spiritual Exploration, First Parish Church of Groton  
Mary Ellen Jeffery, First Parish Church of Kingston UU Church  
Rev. Emily Bruce, Minister, First Parish Church, Kingston  
Kathleen Bean, First Parish Concord (MA) Immigration Justice Task Force  
Jessica Bethoney, First Parish Immigration Justice Task Force  
Rev. Liz Weber, Minister for Congregational Care, First Parish in Concord  
Rev Arthur Lavoie, Minister, First Parish in Plymouth, Unitarian Universalist  
Brigitte Conlon, Volunteer, First Unitarian Church of Worcester  
Rev. Jeffrey Conlon, Volunteer, First Unitarian Church of Worcester  
Robert Persons, First Unitarian Universalist Society in Newton  
Judi Rae Fonsh, Advisory Board member, Franklin Site Board DMH  
Jay Spencer, French Press Bakery & Cafe  
Trish Appert, Executive Director, Friendly House  
Rev. Liz Georgakopoulos, Pastor, Grace Church Federated  
Ralph E. Hicks, Ed. D., Grassroots Central Mass  
Regina Edmonds, Member - Leadership Team, Grassroots Central Mass  
Alisa Klein, Executive Director, Grow Food Northampton  
Hayley Wood, Director, Hadley Senior Center

Rose M Boursiquot, Director, Haitian Community: Love in action  
Rabbi Robin Sparr, Rabbi, HaMakom is The Place  
Rev. Katie Cole, Pastor, Hartford Street Presbyterian Church  
Steven Ridini, President & CEO, Health Resources in Action  
Rabbi Karen Landy, Senior Chaplain, Hebrew Senior Live  
Stacy Robinson, Volunteer Advisor, Holyoke/Chicopee Site Advisory Board to MA DMH  
Susan Worgaftik, Coordinator, Housing Greenfield  
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer, IBA-Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion  
Helena DaSilva Hughes, President, Immigrants' Assistance Center, Inc.  
Abigail Buhle, Volunteer, Immigration Justice Task Force, First Parish, Concord  
Karen Nothe-Valley, Member-at-large, Indivisible  
Patricia Stockwell, Member-at-large, Indivisible  
Peter McConarty, Member-at-large, Indivisible  
Kevin Moulton, Member-at-large, Indivisible  
Jill Leukhardt, Member-at-large, Indivisible  
Rachel Horak, Member-at-large, Indivisible  
Jeanne Duffy, Member-at-large, Indivisible  
Mary Sacksteder, Member-at-large, Indivisible  
Frances Langille, Member-at-large, Indivisible  
Amy Clarke, Interfaith Council Housing Assistance Committee  
Sara Benjamin, Program Director, JRI Health Law Institute, JRI Health  
Mary Memmott, Justice and Love in Action Team, Edwards Church, UCC, Framingham  
Jane Matlaw, Board Member, JVS  
Kelly Tessitore, VP of Policy & Advancement, JVS Boston  
Nancy Coan, Director, Lowell Alliance  
Laura Martinez, Health Equity Consultant (Owner), Mart Consulting, LLC  
Ashleigh Melayne Miller, Community Relations Representative III, Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership  
Jeb Mays, Executive Committee, Massachusetts Interfaith Worker Justice  
Al Vega, Chief of Strategy and Engagement, Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH)  
Katy Z. Allen, Rabbi, Ma'yan Tikvah  
Rose-Darla Pascal, Rapid Response Community Liaison, Mayor's Office For Immigrant Advancement  
Olivia Bernstein, Senior Clinical Director, Mental Health Association  
Michelle McGrath, Founding President, Michelle McGrath PR  
Karen Boujoukos, Chairperson, MLK Action Team  
Marie Chantal Dicardy, Owner, Multi Business Services  
Kate Schadinger, Network for Social Justice  
Liora Norwich, Executive Director, Network for Social Justice  
Joan Horgan, Social Justice Committee, New Roads Catholic Community  
Joel Wallen, Associate Executive Director, Pernet Family Health Service  
The Reverend John F. Hudson, Pastor, Pilgrim United Church of Christ  
Linda Herbst Harding, Librarian, Plymouth North High School  
Constance Melahoures, President, Plymouth Taskforce to End Homelessness  
Jeanne Krieger, Progressive Democrats of MA (PDM)  
Jeanne Kempthorne, Sustaining member, Progressive Democrats of Massachusetts  
Jonathan Cohn, Policy Director, Progressive Massachusetts  
Jan Soma, Steering Committee, Progressive Needham  
Jessica Collins, Executive Director, Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts  
Mary Helen Lorenz, Chair, Racial Justice Advocates, First Parish Lincoln

Mariam Gas, Executive Director, Refugee & Immigrant Assistance Center  
Meg Gallo, Program Director, Refugee & Immigrant Assistance Center, Worcester  
Jacob Bombard, Executive Director, Rian Immigrant Center  
Martine Jn Louis, RISE  
Wanda Torres, Assistant Program Director, River Valley Counseling Center  
Jennifer J Yanco, Member, Safe Medford  
Madeline Leue, Housing Navigator, Salasin Project  
Carl Offner, Chair, Sanctuary Committee of Congregation Beth El, Sudbury  
David Jaffe, Founder, Sharon Interfaith Action  
Priya Rathnam, Shrewsbury Public Library  
Jennifer Rifkin, LICSW, Clinical Director, Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services  
Cate Goetschius, Clinical Intern, Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services  
Abigail Sproles, Intern, Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services  
Esther Konadu, Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services, Inc.  
Rabbi Jeremy Master, Sinai Temple, Sinai Temple  
Peggy Comfrey, CSJ, Justice Promoter, Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston  
Marissa L Dupont, Coordinating Committee Member, Solidarity Lowell  
Karen Quinones, Special Options Coordinator, Southeastern Mass Opportunity Council  
Emilia Rodriguez, Program Manager, Springfield Family Resource Center  
Yaneth Garcia, Family Support Worker, Springfield Family Resource Center - Gandara Center  
Matthew Stewart, Rector, St. James's Episcopal Church  
Rev. Becky Binns, Rector, St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Beth Brady, Outreach Committee Chair, St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Miriam Stein, Stein Consulting  
Titus DosRemedios, Deputy Director, Strategies for Children  
Cantor David Wolff, Cantor, Temple Beth Am Framingham  
Judy Schechtman, Temple Beth Zion  
Thomas Alpert, Rabbi, Temple Etz Chaim  
Rabbi Raysh Weiss, PhD, Co-Senior Rabbi, Temple Israel of Natick  
Rev. William C. Konicki, The Catholic Community of Sacred Heart Hopedale, MA  
Helina Almonte, The Center to Support Immigrant Organizing  
Joyce Ashley, Member, The Church of the Pilgrimage  
Adam Tierney-Eliot, Pastor, The Eliot Church, Natick  
Thomas OBrien, Chief Executive Officer, The HYM Investment Group, LLC  
Sarah Bayer, Director of Resource & Support Services, The Rian Immigrant Center  
Reverend Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn, Assistant Minister, The Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield  
Matthew Hudson, Medical Student, UMass Chan Medical School  
Maxwell Stukalin, Medical Student, UMass Chan Medical School  
Liza Neal, Reverend, United Church of Christ  
Paula Rayman, Professor Emerita, University of Massachusetts Lowell  
Bishop Nicolas Homicil, Executive Director, Voice of the Gospel Tabernacle Church and Tabernacle Multi Service Center Inc  
Sarah Hamburg, Watertown Refugee Support Group  
Irene Bocella, Watertown Refugee Support Group  
Anni Zhu, Way Finders  
Layne Diniz, Administrative Assistant, Wayside  
Norman M Thibeault, Announcer / Copy Editor, WBUR Radio  
Amy Ebbeson, Worcester Addresses Childhood Trauma  
Kirsten Frazier, Multilingual Teacher, Worcester Public Schools

Allison Negron-Campbell, Social Emotional Learning Coach, Worcester Public Schools  
Deborah Bunker, LICSW, Clinician, YOU, Inc. Worcester Family Resource Center  
Rev. Myozen Joan Amaral, Founder, Zen Center North Shore  
Immigration and Sanctuary Group of Follen Church  
Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU  
Rabbi Randy Kafka  
Cantor Vera Broekhuysen  
Rev. John J. Oliveira  
Rabbi Bruce Bromberg Seltzer  
Rev. Alecia Reeves Freeman  
Rabbi Becky Silverstein  
The Rev. Thomas N. Synan  
Rabbi Raysh Weiss  
Rabbi Ken Richmond  
Maggie Sullivan, FNP-BC, DrPH, FAAN  
Nicole Lamontagne, MSW, LICSW  
Ruth Abrams  
Christopher Allen  
Bogdan Anton  
Valerie Bailey  
Ari Barbanell  
Mary Ann Barton  
Meryl Becker  
Maryanne Bernini Caughlin  
Beth Britz  
Lynne Brodsky  
Robert Bruce Brown  
Joanne Campbell  
Wendy Campbell  
James Cohen  
Nick Cream  
Jane Current  
Maggie Day  
Edward De Vos  
Chuck Dickinson  
Brooke Eaton-Skea  
Anne Engelhart  
Deborah Etzel  
Deborah Feldman  
Mary Flanagan  
Heidi Friedman  
Carrie Fuchs  
Grace Gámez  
Judy Goldberg  
Temple Goodhe  
Heather Gordon  
Edith Graf  
Sarah Guilford  
Tracy Guzman  
Sarah Heller

Elizabeth Hester  
Becky Ikehara  
Barry Ingber  
Paul Jablon  
Erica Jackson  
Susan R. Kahn  
Willa Kahn  
Frank Kartheiser  
Nina Judith Katz  
Tina Marie Kempner  
Diana Keohane  
Abigail Kinsman  
Charles E. Knight  
Mahimasri Kotamreddy  
Xóchi Kountz  
Patricia Kryzak  
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Gloria Legvold  
Alana Lipkin  
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Jeff Lowe  
Arthur MacEwan  
Kara McLaughlin  
Debra. S. Mello  
Margaret Miller  
Dove Morissette  
Marilyn Mullane  
James Nehring  
Aura Obando  
Mary B. O'Connor  
Amanda Oicle  
Kaihla Olivar  
Susan Phillips  
Maureen Pollock  
Lonnie A. Powers  
Myriam Poznar  
Richard Rabin  
Robert M. Reece, MD  
Patrick Rohan  
Hope Rubin  
John Rufo  
Jordan Samiljan  
Renate Sands  
Jessica Santos  
Nancy Sardeson  
Rwick Sarkar  
Elizabeth Scott  
Patty Shepard  
Blake Shetler  
Martha Simon



Rebecca Slisz  
Frederick Smith  
Lisa Noling Snellings  
Willie Sordillo  
Bobbie Sproat  
Emmy Suhl  
Chris Sweetnam  
Joan Thompson-Stein  
Maria Thomson  
Mary Tittmann  
Andrea Tomsho-Dexter  
Marianne Vesey  
Elizabeth Waltman  
Amanda Wayne  
Stephen L. White  
Patricia Williams  
Andrea Wizer  
Jud Wolberg  
Julie Wolf  
Gerri Wright  
Peter Wulkan