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TO: Committee of the Conference
FROM: U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants (USCRI), Ethiopian Community
Development Council (ECDC), & World Learning/School for International Training
DATE: April 29, 2024
SUBJECT: FY2025 funding for transitional housing of refugees in Vermont

Dear Conferees:

On behalf of refugees (“New Vermonters”) and the non-profit organizations who support their resettlement across Vermont, **we seek your support of \$900,000 in the final FY2025 budget for the General Fund to the Agency of Human Services’ State Refugee Office for grants to support the transitional housing of refugees.** Both the House and Senate recommended this level of funding in H. 829 and the amended version of H. 883, respectively. Continued state funding for transitional housing of incoming refugees is the right thing to do, and it is a smart investment for Vermont's future - stimulating economic growth, countering labor shortages, and addressing the challenges of an aging population.

FY2025 Budget Request and Rationale:

If enacted, \$900,000 in the FY2025 Base Budget for the General Fund to the Agency of Human Services’ State Refugee Office for grants to support the transitional housing of refugees, would support:

1. A full year of transitional housing costs for approximately 275 refugees in northern Vermont run by USCRI, for 7 week stays in current and new short-term housing options, such as hotels, motels, or short-term rental units.
2. A full year of the transitional housing program costs for approximately 65 refugees in southern Vermont run by World Learning/SIT and ECDC, for 16-24 week stays in residence halls on the World Learning/SIT campus or in other transitional housing.
3. Vermont’s continued leadership in welcoming refugees, by building on the funding provided in the FY2024 Budget Adjustment Act for transitional housing.

Refugee resettlement highlights:

Since 1980, USCRI has resettled more than 10,000 refugees in Vermont and served 220 Afghan Humanitarian Parolees and 90 Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees. In Federal FY2023 alone:

- 230 refugees and 58 Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees received support.
- 82 percent of refugees were employed in more than 30 businesses, contributing \$1.5 million (and counting) in taxable wages.

Since 2022, ECDC, the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC), and World Learning/SIT have supported over 300 refugees in Windham and Bennington counties, resulting in:

- 88 percent of refugees permanently settling in the state and 98 percent securing permanent housing within four to five months.
- 83 percent of job-seeking refugees employed in 49 local businesses, earning \$19.07 an hour, and contributing over \$3.7 million (and counting) in annual taxable wages.

With your continued support for transitional housing of incoming refugees to Vermont, together we will continue to transform lives and strengthen the economic and cultural vitality of communities across the state.

On behalf of our organizations and Vermont's refugees, we appreciate your consideration of this funding request and are available to provide any additional information that your Committee might require.

Very sincerely,



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U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)



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