

Subject: Funding Appeal in FY2024 Budget Adjustment Act and FY2025 Budget for Transitional Housing for Refugees in Vermont

Below is a concise yet comprehensive update on the current state of refugee resettlement in Vermont emphasizing the critical need for funding support for transitional housing. The ongoing success of newly arrived refugees and the organizations supporting them, including the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC), World Learning, and the School for International Training, hinges on transitional housing.

Since 2022, World Learning, ECDC, and BDCC have joined forces, bringing over 290 refugees to southern Vermont, resulting in an extraordinary impact to date on local communities.

- Ninety percent of refugees in southern Vermont have chosen permanent settlement, with an impressive 98 percent securing permanent housing within four months.
- Employment rates are notable, with 83 percent of employable refugees finding jobs in 49 local businesses, contributing over \$3.7 million in taxable wages and addressing workforce shortages.

The picture in northern Vermont is similarly inspiring with USCRI having resettled 288 refugees during the same timeframe.

- 82 percent of job-seeking refugees have found employment with 17 businesses, contributing \$1.5 million in taxable wages.

Transitional housing has played a crucial role in achieving these outstanding outcomes, particularly in southern Vermont, where it has been integrated from the start into the resettlement program centered around the World Learning and SIT Campus. Without additional funding for transitional housing, the permanent closure of the refugee resettlement program in southern Vermont and the freezing of refugee arrivals in northern Vermont is inevitable.

Funding Appeal:

Emergency funding is urgently needed to sustain transitional housing in southern Vermont, which is set to end next month (February).

- ECDC (southern VT) and USCRI (northern VT) are seeking a total of \$671,000 for transitional housing in FY2024 and \$879,000 for FY2025.

Specific funding breakdown:

- Southern VT (ECDC via World Learning/SIT Campus) for FY2024: \$271,000 and FY2025: \$629,000
- Northern VT (USCRI via motels and Airbnbs) for FY2024: \$400,000 and FY2025: \$250,000

State funding for temporary housing is not only the morally right thing to do but also a smart investment in Vermont's future, aligning with Governor Scott's vision to revitalize communities and counter troubling demographic trends. Refugee resettlement stimulates economic growth, counters labor shortages, and addresses the challenges of an aging population.

Thank you for your attention.

Best regards,