



World Learning
EDUCATION | DEVELOPMENT | EXCHANGE

To: Senate Committee on Appropriations
From: U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants (USCRI), Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), & World Learning/School for International Training
Date: April 10, 2024
Subject: FY2025 Base Budget funding for transitional housing of refugees in Vermont

Dear Senators:

On behalf of refugees (“New Vermonters”) and the non-profit organizations who support their resettlement across Vermont, we seek your support of **\$998,700 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**. Continued state funding for transitional housing of incoming refugees is not only the right thing to do, but also a smart investment for Vermont's future - stimulating economic growth, countering labor shortages, and addressing the challenges of an aging population.

Refugee resettlement highlights:

Since 2022, the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), 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.

Since 1980, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) in Vermont has resettled more than 10,000 refugees and served 220 Afghan Humanitarian Parolees and 90 Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees. In Federal FY2023 alone:

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

FY2025 Budget Request and Rationale:

Please support \$998,700 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, which includes:

1. Approximately \$648,700 to support a full year of transitional housing program in southern Vermont run by World Learning/SIT and ECDC. Such funding would support:
 - Approximately 200 new refugee arrivals to the region during Federal FY2025.
 - Up to 87 refugees at one time for 16-24 weeks in residence halls on the World Learning/SIT campus or in other transitional housing, as needed.

2. Approximately \$350,000 to help cover a full year of transitional housing costs in northern Vermont run by USCRI. Such funding would support:
 - Approximately 320 refugees for up to 7 weeks in current and new short-term housing options, including hotels, motels, or short-term rental units.

Funding history:

- The final FY2024 Budget Adjustment Act included \$671,000 for transitional housing of refugees through this fiscal year's end. These funds enable existing refugee transitional housing programs across the state to continue and demonstrate to the entire nation Vermont's ongoing leadership in welcoming and supporting refugees.
- The House recommended \$900,000 for grants to support transitional housing of refugees in H. 829, an act relating to long-term housing solutions, which passed in the House on April 2, 2025. While appreciated, this funding will not cover the estimated full cost of transitional housing for the FY2025 fiscal year.

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,



Amila Merdzanovic, MALD
Field Office Director
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)



Joe Wiah
Executive Director
Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)



Carol Jenkins
CEO
World Learning/SIT