

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 25, 2022

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Michael Lee
Chairman, Emergency Food and Shelter
National Board Program
Chief, Office of Strategy and Innovation
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Administrator Criswell and Chairman Lee:

We write to request your support in enabling more Massachusetts organizations – especially those providing humanitarian aid to migrants – to access assistance from the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).¹ Dozens of Massachusetts organizations have benefited from this federal assistance including pantries, shelters, and community centers that can use EFSP funds to distribute food and provide lodging.² And a number of extremely valued Massachusetts organizations perform crucial work to help administer EFSP locally—a service we greatly appreciate.³ But we have also heard from a number of other organizations assisting the recent migrants arriving in Massachusetts that they are either unaware of EFSP or do not have a track record of receiving EFSP awards.⁴ To ensure that these worthy organizations are able to participate in the program, we ask that FEMA: (1) conduct enhanced outreach to Massachusetts organizations to share updated guidance on how to access EFSP funds, (2) update the EFSP website, and (3) provide a briefing to the Massachusetts Congressional delegation regarding FEMA’s current efforts to make EFSP funds as accessible as possible.

The Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants welcomed about 1,000 individuals in 2021 that included refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers.⁵ But this pace has increased significantly this year: estimates suggest that over 2,000 migrants,

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

² Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program, “Funded Organizations,” <https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/index.cfm?template=fundedLROAwardByPhase.cfm>;

Boston Globe, “Immigration and legal advocacy groups map out plans to help Venezuelan migrants on Martha’s Vineyard,” Emily Sweeney and Milton J. Valencia, September 15, 2022, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/09/15/metro/immigration-legal-advocacy-groups-map-out-plans-help-venezuelan-migrants-marthas-vineyard/>.

³ Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program, “Local Board Contacts – MASSACHUSETTS,” <https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/Website/temp/9C5D5145-5056-B6CA-EE57B384EB56FED0.pdf>; Federal Emergency Management Agency, “Fact Sheet: Emergency Food and Shelter Program,” <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/emergency-food-shelter-program.pdf>.

⁴ Letter from Senators Warren and Markey and Representatives Clark, Moulton, Auchincloss, Pressley, Trahan, McGovern, Lynch, and Keating to Federal Emergency Management Agency and Department of Homeland Security, September 19, 2022, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/download/20220919-letter-to-fema-and-dhs-requesting-expedited-aid-for-newly-arrived-migrants>.

primarily from Haiti and South American countries, arrived in the Boston area between May and August 2022.⁶ More have continued to arrive, including about 50 Venezuelan migrants who were flown under harmful, potentially illegal, and politically-motivated circumstances from Texas to Martha's Vineyard on September 14, 2022.⁷ Massachusetts organizations have capably provided dignified humanitarian assistance to people in need.⁸ However, they have also told us that they need more resources to support the growth in the number of migrants arriving within this relatively short period of time.⁹

EFSP's goal is to "award funds as efficiently as possible to meet the urgent needs of local agencies in assisting the unique and vulnerable migrant population encountered by DHS."¹⁰ The program awarded Massachusetts organizations over \$3 million in aid last year to supplement their ongoing work of providing shelter, food, transportation, and health aid to migrants.¹¹ But we have learned from our discussions with some organizations assisting migrants that without a history of applying for EFSP funds and familiarity with the application process, they are encountering barriers to benefit from the program.¹²

We have already asked FEMA and DHS to award EFSP funds as quickly and with as little bureaucratic delay as possible to Massachusetts organizations that are providing

⁵ Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants, "Annual Report 2021," 2021, pp. 3, <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2021-ori-annual-report/download>.

⁶ WBUR, "Medical system in Mass. Seeing a significant increase in asylum-seeking families," Gabrielle Emanuel, September 15, 2022, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2022/09/15/migrants-uptick-boston-south-americans-haiti>.

⁷ New York Times, "Florida Flies 2 Planeloads of Migrants to Martha's Vineyard," Patricia Mazzei, Remy Tumin, and Eliza Fawcett, September 14, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/14/us/desantis-florida-migrants-marthas-vineyard.html>; New York Times, "Is That Legal? How Scores of Migrants Came to Be Shipped North," Zolan Kanno-Youngs and Eileen Sullivan, September 16, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/16/us/politics/migrants-marthas-vineyard-desantis.html>.

⁸ Boston Globe, "Immigration and legal advocacy groups map out plans to help Venezuelan migrants on Martha's Vineyard," Emily Sweeney and Milton J. Valencia, September 15, 2022, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/09/15/metro/immigration-legal-advocacy-groups-map-out-plans-help-venezuelan-migrants-marthas-vineyard/>.

⁹ Boston Globe, "'The system is strained': Greater Boston's support networks struggle to keep up as thousands of migrants surge into the area," Mike Damiano, October 13, 2022, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/10/13/metro/system-is-strained-thousands-migrants-surge-into-greater-boston-stressing-local-support-networks/>.

¹⁰ Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Emergency Food and Shelter Program," <https://www.fema.gov/grants/emergency-food-and-shelter-program>.

¹¹ Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program, "State Award History," <https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/index.cfm?template=EFSPAwardByPhase.cfm>.

¹² Boston Globe, "'The system is strained': Greater Boston's support networks struggle to keep up as thousands of migrants surge into the area," Mike Damiano, October 13, 2022, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/10/13/metro/system-is-strained-thousands-migrants-surge-into-greater-boston-stressing-local-support-networks/>.

humanitarian aid to migrants.¹³ FEMA must now also ensure that these funds are accessible to organizations that are new to the program.¹⁴

To address our concerns, we request that FEMA enhance their outreach and education efforts with Massachusetts organizations to equip them with the necessary information to apply for and receive EFSP awards. Because EFSP's FY22 appropriation has "limited funding remaining" and will prioritize "agencies providing shelter and food to migrants closest to the southwest border," we anticipate that Massachusetts organizations will urgently need updated information to prepare their applications.¹⁵ This outreach should include:

1. Holding information campaigns or webinars to inform organizations how they can submit a regular application or make a Special Funding Request to "request grant funding in advance (versus seeking reimbursement), fund or supplement current services or to accommodate an unexpected growth in service demand."¹⁶
2. Ensuring and supporting the Local Boards that are responsible for advertising the availability of funds and considering applications for Massachusetts areas are actively communicating with local organizations and encouraging their participation.
3. Providing guidance on how to navigate the EFSP website to find critical information relevant to applying, such as the Supplemental Funding Information, Humanitarian Guidance, Addendum to the Humanitarian Guidance, Special Funding Request Guidance, Key Dates, Frequently Asked Questions, and Local Board Contacts.¹⁷
4. Updating outdated information, key dates, and deadlines on the EFSP website. For instance, the website currently includes information for deadlines that have already passed.¹⁸

We also hope that FEMA would provide ample leadership of, or assistance with, these efforts, to avoid placing a major new burden on Massachusetts-based organizations, such as lead county agencies, that are already performing other crucial services for our communities.

¹³ Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren, "Senator Warren, Massachusetts Leaders in Congress Ask FEMA and DHS for Assistance on Recently Arrived Asylum Seekers," press release, September 20, 2022, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/oversight/letters/senator-warren-massachusetts-leaders-in-congress-ask-fema-and-dhs-for-assistance-on-recently-arrived-asylum-seekers>.

¹⁴ Boston Globe, "'The system is strained': Greater Boston's support networks struggle to keep up as thousands of migrants surge into the area," Mike Damiano, October 13, 2022, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/10/13/metro/system-is-strained-thousands-migrants-surge-into-greater-boston-stressing-local-support-networks/>.

¹⁵ Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program, "Humanitarian Relief Funding Guidance Addendum," September, 2022, <https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/PDFs/AddendumtotheHumanitarianGuidance.pdf>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Emergency Food and shelter National Board Program, "Supplemental Funding Information Details," <https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/index.cfm?template=fy2021info.cfm>.

¹⁸ *Id.*

Second, we request a staff-level briefing of our offices by November 18, 2022 to learn about EFSP’s ongoing work to improve the program’s accessibility. We would like the briefing to address at least these questions:


1. EFSP released a Humanitarian Relief Funding Guidance Addendum for FY 22 on September 22, 2022 that implements “additional guidelines to conserve remaining funds and ensure safe humanitarian services are being delivered.”¹⁹
 - a. How do you prioritize and evaluate applications submitted as a Special Funding Request versus regular applications? How will you be doing so for the upcoming application window starting on October 15, 2022 and ending on November 28, 2022?
 - b. What information do Local Boards require from organizations in their jurisdiction to submit a Special Funding Request to the National Board?
 - c. Under what circumstances will Special Funding Grants be awarded for advanced funding?
2. We have heard from FEMA that the normal application period for EFSP 2023 funding has passed and the next opportunity to apply through the normal process will open in the April 2023 timeframe for FY 2024 funding. As noted above, the EFSP website provides Key Dates that do not align with this information.
 - a. What work is EFSP doing to ensure that information on the website is consistent and current?
 - b. How much remaining EFSP funds are left for awards (both reimbursement and advanced distribution) as of when you released the Humanitarian Relief Guidance Addendum and when you deliver the briefing?
3. What administrative discretion do you have to speed the processing of applications and awarding of assistance?
4. What are the most typical challenges organizations face in applying for and receiving EFSP assistance? What steps are you taking to minimize those challenges?
5. What outreach does FEMA, the EFSP National Board, or the Local Boards, do to entities that are doing work aligned with EFSP’s goals, but which have not previously applied for EFSP aid?
6. Please provide summary statistics about funds awarded to Massachusetts entities in the just-concluded 2023 cycle including:
 - a. Percentage of Massachusetts-based EFSP applications that resulted in awards;
 - b. Average award size;
 - c. Average percentage of the requested amount included in the award, and;

¹⁹ Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program, “Humanitarian Relief Funding Guidance Addendum,” September, 2022, <https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/PDFs/AddendumtotheHumanitarianGuidance.pdf>.

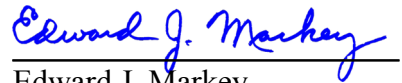
d. Number of awards distributed up-front versus reimbursement.

We thank you for your consideration of this request and for your continued responsiveness to the Massachusetts Congressional delegation. EFSP funds are extremely important, and we are grateful for the work done by organizations at multiple levels to ensure that the program is administered well. We look forward to working with you to continue fulfilling our shared commitment to protecting migrants and vulnerable populations seeking refuge.

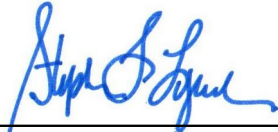
Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



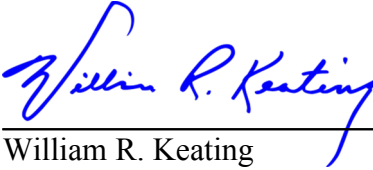
Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress



Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress