

City of Portland

Homelessness Info & Listening Session



Tuesday, June 13, 2023 at 5:30 PM Ocean Gateway
(14 Ocean Gateway Pier, Portland, ME)

REMOTE ACCESS INFORMATION:

The Info & Listening Session will be conducted in-person. Anyone wishing to observe the meeting remotely can do so via Zoom. Allow your computer to install the free Zoom app to get the best meeting experience. If you are not able to attend live either in person or via Zoom, a recording will be available in the [Agenda Center](#) following the meeting.

To comment during the meeting, you must attend in-person. To provide feedback or inquiries after the meeting, contact citymanager@portlandmaine.gov.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://portlandmaine-gov.zoom.us/j/89655983374?pwd=azQ0eHdDU282cUtwejNsOXhiZjZvdz09>

Passcode: 670651

Or One tap mobile :

+13092053325,,89655983374#,,,*670651# US

+13126266799,,89655983374#,,,*670651# US (Chicago)

1. Welcome and Introductions (30 minutes)
 - a. Welcoming Remarks from Kate Snyder, Mayor
 - b. Welcoming Remarks from Councilor April Fournier, Chair of Health & Human Services Committee
 - c. Welcoming Remarks from Danielle West, City Manager
2. Listening Session (90 minutes)
 - a. *Members of the public attending in-person are welcome to share their thoughts, questions, recommendations, and concerns related to homelessness in the City of Portland. Anyone who is unable to attend in-person is welcome to send additional questions to citymanager@portlandmaine.gov after the meeting.*
3. Info Session (30 minutes)
 - a. *Members of the City Council and City Manager West will provide information in response to public concerns, questions, and recommendations.*
 - b. Background Materials
4. Next Steps

City of Portland | Health & Human Services Department

Kristen Dow, *Director*



To: Mayor Snyder and Members of the Portland City Council

CC: Danielle West, City Manager

From: Kristen Dow, Director of Health & Human Services

Date: June 2, 2023

Re: Expo Temporary Emergency Shelter Update

On Monday April 12th, 2023 the Portland Expo was opened as a temporary emergency shelter for asylum-seeking families who were in overflow spaces in a middle school gymnasium and in the day space at our Family Shelter. Within the first week of opening, we quickly reached the 300-person capacity of the space and to date we have remained at or close to capacity.

Our Emergency Operations Center (EOC) command staff continues to hold briefings twice per week. Operations have been going smoothly, with 393 unduplicated individuals served; 3 meals per day served on site; 336 medical screenings and 764 vaccines administered on site; 352 registered volunteers; and 15 different service providers providing services on site.

Use of the Expo for emergency shelter was always intended to be temporary. With that in mind, a subgroup of the EOC command staff has begun discussing the decommissioning of the space, and has determined that Wednesday, August 16th will be the closing date of the emergency shelter. This will allow for necessary cleaning and restoration ahead of the first scheduled event on September 8th.

No new shelter guests will be admitted to the Expo after Monday, June 5, to ensure the building is completely vacated by the decommissioning deadline. This will allow for just over 9 weeks for staff to rehouse the families currently at the Expo. This depopulation/rehousing strategy was used effectively when the Expo was last activated as a temporary emergency shelter (in 2019), as well as more recently at the temporary emergency shelter operating out of the Days Inn in South Portland. We are hopeful that this will allow us time to have the same level of success through a variety of housing and sheltering methods.

City of Portland | Health & Human Services Department

Kristen Dow, *Director*



To: Mayor Snyder and Members of the Portland City Council

CC: Danielle West, City Manager

From: Kristen Dow, Director of Health & Human Services

Date: June 2, 2023

Re: Encampment Crisis Response Team

In response to the guidance given by the Council's Health & Human Services Committee on May 9, staff have begun working toward implementing a task force to improve our encampment removal process by working directly with individuals living in encampments to transition them into shelter or housing prior to removal. This will be known as the Encampment Crisis Response Team (ERCT).

The technical assistance consultants provided by the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development have assisted with the development and implementation of the ECRT. The ECRT is made up of seven functional teams: Outreach and Housing Navigation/Mobile Engagement Center; Housing Matching; Basic Needs and Logistics; Inventory Management; Landlord Management; Performance & Data Management; and Funding Infrastructure. All seven teams will report into command staff (City department directors).

The first meeting of the ECRT was held May 31, and included 18 nonprofit service providers representing six different sectors (outreach, emergency shelter, housing, medical & mental health, faith based organizations, and funders). At the kick-off meeting, City staff and HUD technical assistants explained the mission of this housing-focused approach and the need for broad stakeholder support to be successful.

The functional ECRT teams are working to begin meeting the week of June 5, with the purpose of planning engagement strategies to transition individuals from a large encampment along the Fore River Parkway Trail at Frederic Street. This encampment has been prioritized based on its size (49 tents as of June 2, 2023), health concerns, and safety concerns as observed by City staff and communicated by nearby businesses.

We will continue to keep you informed on the ECRT as we move forward.



To: Members of the Portland City Council

From: Kate Snyder, Mayor

Danielle P. West, Interim City Manager

Date: June 5, 2023

Re: Correspondence to Governor Janet Mills

As you know, our City continues to be overwhelmed by a public demand for emergency shelter and housing. While we have and will continue to creatively leverage the resources at our disposal, we need coordination, policy change, and support at the State level to effectively respond to the crisis at hand.

Enclosed is a letter to Governor Mills describing our challenges, efforts, and request for help. Specifically, we ask for:

- The development of State-level capacity to coordinate services for asylum seekers;
- Additional shelters throughout Maine to meet the emergency shelter needs of all Mainers; and
- Support of and funding for LD 1644, to support an increase in General Assistance reimbursement.

We are aware of community concerns regarding the proliferation of encampments on public property, and share those concerns. On Tuesday, June 13, from 5:30 - 8:00 PM, the City Council and City Manager will host an in-person listening and information session to hear directly from residents (both housed and unhoused), businesses, and other members of our community. We will open the time together by sharing information about the City's multifaceted response to the myriad issues, and welcome any and all suggestions or creative solutions.

City of Portland
Kate Snyder, *Mayor*
Danielle P. West, *City Manager*
June 2, 2023



The Honorable Janet T. Mills
Governor
State of Maine
210 State Street
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Governor Mills,

Thank you for your work to lead the State of Maine through so many challenges and opportunities. It was good to see you in your office on March 21st. We appreciated the time you spent with us, and the brainstorming we did together regarding housing and homelessness including the availability of state owned facilities as options for emergency shelter.

We are writing today to share information regarding the City of Portland's efforts to respond to the ever-increasing emergency shelter needs of two distinct populations: asylum seekers and the circumstantially unhoused.

Since the fall of 2021, thousands of asylum seekers have arrived in Portland seeking shelter and services. And, since January 2023, the average weekly census of new arrivals is 80 asylum seekers, consisting of individuals and families. The majority of people seeking shelter are asylum seekers coming to Maine from our country's southern border.

As we all know, the City of Portland made a decision decades ago to operate a municipal emergency shelter. Since that time, in response to the State of Maine's General Assistance (GA) law, and consistent with the City's commitment to help people in need, our municipal commitment to providing emergency shelter has grown and expanded - in terms of both budget and beds. At this time we host and staff 654 municipal emergency shelter beds, which include:

- 208 beds for individuals at the recently opened Homeless Services Center on Riverside Street;
- 146 beds for families at the Family Shelter on Chestnut Street; and
- 300 temporary beds at the Expo (which will stay open until mid-August).
 - 70% of the beds at the Homeless Services Center are occupied by asylum seekers;
 - 100% of beds at the Family Shelter are occupied by asylum seekers; and
 - 98% of the beds at the Expo are occupied by asylum seekers.

With all of the above emergency shelter beds full, hotels in the region either at capacity and/or no longer accepting unhoused individuals due to changes in Covid protocol or because of changes to local ordinances, and very limited affordable housing stock, we are unable to meet the ever-growing demand for emergency shelter beds. As a result, more circumstantially unhoused people than ever before have resorted to sleeping outside in tents; at last count, over 130 tents had been erected at various locations throughout the city. Many of these encampments pose hazards for those in tents, the general public, and nearby local businesses.

We continue to do our best to work collaboratively, expand municipal resources, leverage much needed and appreciated State and Federal funding, and meet people's needs with humanity. However, starting on May 8, 2022, we alerted the community, including State and service organization partners, that anyone applying for GA in Portland is given information needed to conduct a self directed housing search.

In response to the issue of encampments, we have convened an Encampment Crisis Response Team (ECRT) inclusive of nonprofit service organizations, health providers, housing providers, Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA), and the Corporation for Supportive Housing, contracted by Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This convening is modeled on the structure of an Emergency Operations Center and is our attempt to organize, coordinate and execute a plan to transition those living in tents to housing (whether that is emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing) before encampments are removed due to their hazardous conditions. The ECRT met for the first time on Wednesday, May 31st. The meeting was well attended and productive. In support of this work, we have also requested assistance from Maine Emergency Management Association (MEMA) in order to ensure that this endeavor is successful.

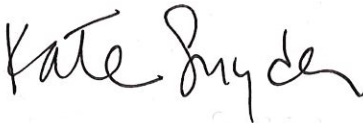
We greatly appreciate your partnership and continued support for the emergency shelter for asylum seekers located in Saco, and we respectfully request your leadership to develop additional state level capacity to coordinate services for asylum seekers, and to develop additional emergency shelters and/or transitional housing with supportive services throughout the state to meet the needs of all Mainers. We also ask for your support of LD1644 and its fiscal note, which supports an increase in State reimbursement from 70% to 90% for all municipalities administering GA.

We know that the ECRT, and some of our above requests, will take time to yield results. And so we have been looking to other cities and states, to find alternative options and more immediate responses to the need for shelter. We understand that some states have called on the National Guard to assist with the provision of temporary shelter, as well as logistical and operational support until long term solutions can be implemented. Our hope is to avoid a need to request such action, but should we not be able to meet the goal of housing people living outdoors soon, we would like to be able to discuss that and other available options with you.

Lastly, we invite you to visit Portland this summer. We'd welcome the opportunity to give you a tour of the new Homeless Services Center, and other shelter sites as time allows.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our requests. We look forward to continuing to work with you, your staff, and the Legislature on addressing these critical issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kate Snyder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kate" being more prominent than the last name "Snyder".

Kate Snyder, Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Danielle P. West". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Danielle" being more prominent than the last name "West".

Danielle P. West, City Manager



Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

June 9, 2023

The City of Portland
Kate Snyder, Mayor
Danielle P. West, City Manager

Dear Mayor Snyder and City Manager West:

Thank you for your June 2nd letter to Governor Mills. The Governor asked that I respond to your letter on her behalf.

First, on behalf of the Governor and her Administration, I thank you and the dedicated and hardworking staff of the City for your tireless efforts to address this difficult situation. The sudden and unpredictable influxes of asylum seekers is fundamentally a national problem, and, as the Governor has long called for, Congress must overhaul the country's broken immigration system, which is unfairly placing a tremendous burden on both states and communities like yours.

The Governor also strongly believes the Federal government should provide greater Federal resources to states and communities that are grappling with the effects of its failure to address this problem, and we encourage you to continue your engagement with Maine's Congressional Delegation to that end. Further, the Governor supports expediting reviews of asylum applications and work authorizations, so those seeking asylum can more easily enter the workforce to support themselves and their families, which would help reduce demands on State and municipal budgets.

In the continued absence of Federal leadership and reforms, the Governor has directed her Administration to evaluate what additional support is needed when it comes to the coordination of services and how the State may play the most effective role in supporting these efforts. We will continue to engage with the City and other municipalities in Maine, as well as other organizations and stakeholders, to consider options. As always, we will continue to explore what more the State can reasonably do to support municipalities, integrate asylum seekers more quickly into our communities and workforce, and strengthen Maine's employers and our economy. I will keep you apprised as these discussions proceed.

The Governor recognizes the urgent need for additional shelter space to serve asylum seekers and other individuals and families experiencing homelessness. She has proposed \$12 million in one-time funding to the Emergency Housing Relief Fund that she and the Legislature created in 2022 to support emergency housing needs in communities across Maine. Specifically, these funds could be used to extend housing supports to individuals and families now in transitional housing, such as at the Asylum Seeker Transitional Housing Program in Saco, and to expand support for shelters and other efforts to help those experiencing homelessness.

As you know, the City has had exclusive access to the program in Saco for placements to help provide as much relief to the City as possible and take pressure off your General Assistance department. Over its first year, the program has successfully assisted 440 people -- which include 205 adults and 235 children -- with



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housing and services including cultural orientation, transportation, school enrollment, and connections with health care providers and adult education classes. We are pleased that funding is available to extend this program through the end of this year, and that a portion of the \$12 million proposed by the Governor for emergency housing would be used to extend it through the end of 2024. We hope this additional funding is approved by the Legislature, so we can continue to work closely with the City and MaineHousing, which allocates the funding, on this opportunity and others to create additional housing options where possible.

This additional funding builds on the \$43 million the Governor and the Legislature provided over the past year to address homelessness, including in Portland. That funding is now supporting three shelters in Portland through at least next winter, housing more than 120 people, and is also set to support the full acquisition, development, and operation of a forthcoming 180-bed shelter in the city through funds awarded by MaineHousing.

We deeply appreciate the City's partnership and collaboration in working through the details to establish this new shelter, which we believe would not only provide shelter and supports for asylum-seeking individuals, but also allow people now living outside in encampments to access shelter and support services at the Homeless Resource Center. We understand the City Council is expected to take action regarding this shelter proposal on Monday, and we strongly encourage the Council to endorse this important and needed project.

With respect to General Assistance, I can share that the Administration believes General Assistance is a critical short-term support, but the program is unsustainable for municipalities and the State as currently structured. As you know, the Department of Health and Human Services has begun a series of listening sessions to gather feedback from key stakeholders on what is working and what needs improvement, with the goal of developing long-term reforms to improve the program to better meet Maine's needs in the future. The purpose is to develop an informed proposal for General Assistance for the long run.

To address immediate pressures on the program, the Governor has proposed a one-time \$3 million in supplemental General Assistance support for municipalities and a one-time \$7.5 million appropriation to ensure that the State meets its obligations under General Assistance in Fiscal Year 2024. These proposals build on the \$10 million delivered to municipalities last year (including more than \$7 million for Portland) to offset increased spending during the COVID-19 pandemic and the \$5 million for General Assistance included in the Fiscal Year 2023 emergency supplemental budget.

The Governor has pledged that her Administration will continue work in partnership with you and other municipalities, as we have in the past, on the issues raised in your letter. To that end, I have attached an overview of the State's efforts – including support for housing, legal, education, and other services for those who are unhoused and seeking asylum. As always, at the Governor's direction, I remain available to you to continue our efforts to serve unhoused individuals and to better address the issues surrounding the arrival of those seeking asylum.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Kennedy
Chief of Staff, Governor Janet Mills



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Additional Background on State Action:

Given existing Federal constraints, the Administration has worked in partnership with many municipalities, MaineHousing, the Legislature, and Maine's Congressional Delegation over the past four years to support Maine towns and cities with helping asylum seekers transition into Maine's communities and workforce.

The Administration has enacted changes to the rules governing General Assistance to ensure the program serves people intended to receive assistance under the law as we chart a more sustainable path forward for the program, and the Governor joined Maine's Congressional Delegation to fight for reimbursement for the City of Portland from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Since then, our involvement has evolved to account for not only the immediate needs of asylum seekers, but supporting their safety, security, and success over the long-term by delivering funding to frontline organizations and coordinating across government and with partners.

For housing support, these efforts include:

Emergency Housing to provide immediate shelter to those who arrive in Maine:

- Three new shelters in Portland, with a total of about 120 beds, that will continue to serve asylum seeking individuals and families through next winter;
- Hotel rooms that served dozens more asylum-seeking households unable to access emergency shelters;
- \$5.2 million in financing to support a new 180-bed shelter in Portland, that will provide both shelter and services for asylum-seeking individuals and families and create space at the City's Homeless Resource Center to serve those currently living in outdoor encampments.

Transitional Housing to provide longer-term housing, paired with high-quality and comprehensive services, to assist asylum-seeking households with the transition to their new lives in Maine:

- Since the summer of 2022, using state funds authorized by the Legislature, the Asylum Seeker Transitional Housing Program in Saco has successfully assisted over 115 families -- a total of 440 people, 205 adults and 235 children -- with housing and daily services provided by Catholic Charities of Maine, including cultural orientation, transportation, school enrollment, and connections with health care providers and adult education classes. The City of Portland has had exclusive access to the hotel for placements as a way to provide as much relief to the City as possible and to take pressure off the General Assistance department. There is funding available to extend the hotel and services through the end of this year, and a portion of the \$12 million for emergency housing included in Governor Mills' change package would be used to continue the Saco hotel through the end of 2024, if approved by the Legislature.
- This month, transitional housing will be made available in Portland for up to 16 pregnant mothers currently experiencing homelessness. Comprehensive health services will be provided by Northern Light Health, and the John T. Gorman Foundation will support 24-hour staffing, case management services and wide-ranging supports designed to give women the stable and nurturing environment clinically proven to improve birth outcomes. While the first residents of this program are expected to be women seeking asylum, because they represent the vast majority of pregnant women currently experiencing homelessness locally, this site will continue to provide supportive housing to vulnerable populations for at least 45 years under the direction of Community Housing of Maine.

Permanent Housing for more than 250 families, or more than 800 people, to realize the safety and stability of a permanent home:



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- In coordination with MaineHousing and local housing developers, making about 125 apartments in Greater Portland accessible to asylum seeking households. Specifically, funds allocated through the FY23 supplemental budget are being used to pay for up to two years of rent at housing units located in South Portland, Portland, and Brunswick. Within that two-year period, these households are expected to receive the supports and guidance they need to settle and enter the workforce, thus gaining the means to pay for their own housing costs before their rent supports expire. The first individuals engaged in this initiative moved into their new apartments in March 2023.
- In coordination with MaineHousing, Prosperity Maine and Immigrant Resource Center of Maine, providing the rent supplements necessary for an additional 125 asylum seeking households in the Greater Portland and Lewiston/Auburn areas to remain in their homes and avoid eviction. These rent supports began in March 2023, and partner organizations in this initiative are actively working with families to ensure that they have fully navigated the work authorization process and are able to support themselves through gainful employment by the time this assistance expires.

For legal support, these efforts include:

Legal support to help those seeking asylum navigate the work authorization process and to successfully apply and receive work authorization as soon as possible, so that they can more quickly provide for themselves and their families, reduce pressure on public assistance programs, and help local employers and economies by joining the workforce. This includes:

- \$750,000 to the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project over three years to increase their outreach by 300 percent and provide more asylum-seeking households with consultations and information sessions to help them understand their immigration cases and how to apply for asylum.
- \$100,000 to Hope Acts over two years to allow them to continue the highly successful Asylum Application Assistance Program, held two days per week at the Portland Public Library, which offers assistance to about 100 asylum-seeking households each month.
- \$100,000 to Maine Immigrant & Refugee Services to provide asylum application and work authorization assistance to dozens of households in Brunswick.
- \$276,000 from the Maine Department of Labor to Hope Acts to continue and expand its work authorization clinic over the next two years. This initiative is leveraging federal funding through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan to support the clinic operations, including staffing, interpreter resources and needed supplies. Through this partnership, the clinic intends to support 1,000 work authorization applications over the next two years. Additionally, MDOL is deploying staff from the Portland CareerCenter to provide on-site career counseling services at the clinic, to help facilitate connections to jobs and training opportunities.

For education support, these efforts include:

Funding support, resources and technical assistance through the Maine Department of Education, including:

- Ensuring students have access to McKinney-Vento homelessness resources and to ensure multilingual students get a quality education.
- Providing eligible SAUs more than \$2 million in Homeless Children and Youth (HCY) funds from the American Rescue Plan during the pandemic.
- Contracting with multiple community-based organizations with the American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth State Set-Aside, including Preble Street and Gateway Community Services, to offer additional support to both schools and to multilingual students experiencing homelessness.



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- Providing an additional \$7.1 million this year in federal emergency relief funds to SAUs based on multilingual and homeless student enrollment to provide additional services and support to those student populations. The Department is looking at providing another round of funding based on additional needs and enrollment changes.
- Ensuring that SAUs know they may also be eligible for a special education budgetary hardship adjustment or a minimum economically hardship adjustment, based on the needs of these students. These funds would be calculated based on enrollment through the school funding process.
- Providing \$3.2 million in grants through the Governor's Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan to support workforce skills and development and English language acquisition programs at adult education centers across the state

For services support, these efforts include:

Funding to address a growing need to assist homeless individuals with coordination of services and cultural brokering to help asylum seekers, including:

- The last budget's \$22 million included \$750,000 for case management services to people experiencing homelessness in four regions of the state, including asylum seeking households. Funding allows case managers to help individuals access a range of critical services including housing and mental health services. The Administration is focused on contracting with community-based organizations that have provided community care services to homeless populations throughout the pandemic. Case management services include cultural brokers when necessary.
- Bi-weekly meetings among the Department of Health and Human Services, the City of Portland, and other nonprofit agencies to assist the City, as well as agencies who are working directly with the homeless population in the Portland and greater Portland area. MaineHousing is included in these meetings and works collaboratively with the Department to help the City and other agencies navigate situations involving asylum seekers and other people experiencing homelessness.
- The Department of Health and Human Services has also provided more than \$15 million to 16 immigrant-led community-based organizations to provide public health, case management, and social service supports in their communities, including to asylum-seekers. It is using its U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention health disparities grant to continue this support in the short-term.
- The Legislature with support from the Governor funded MaineCare or Medicaid coverage for children and pregnant people who would be eligible but for immigration status effective July 1, 2022.



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The Honorable Janet T. Mills
Governor
State of Maine
210 State Street
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Governor Mills,

As Greater Portland's businesses and non-profits, we are writing to request urgent action from your administration, in conjunction with the Legislature, to address the challenges associated with the unprecedented arrival of asylum seekers and the elevated levels of homelessness in our community. In their letter on June 2nd, Mayor Kate Snyder and City Manager Danielle West eloquently outlined how our community has reached its limits in responding to these issues, emphasizing the crucial need for the state to take on a larger role.

Since the fall of 2021, thousands of asylum seekers have arrived in Maine. Moreover, the influx of domestic homeless individuals from various communities in Maine, New England, and around the country has further strained our local resources, resulting in the highest levels of unsheltered homelessness in recent memory. While our municipal staff and community non-profits, with the help of federal pandemic aid, have made herculean efforts to manage this situation, these temporary measures are unsustainable in the long run. This issue is not unique to Portland, with communities including Westbrook, South Portland, Brunswick, Sanford, Lewiston and Bangor facing similar challenges.

To address the overwhelming challenges we face, our first priority is to increase the state's share of General Assistance from 70% to 90%, as outlined in LD 1664, which received unanimous support from the Committee on Health and Human Services. Without this change, property taxpayers in Portland for example will be burdened with a 10.4% increase in the property tax levy to fulfill the city's obligations under state law. Such a substantial increase, exceeding inflation, would adversely affect both businesses and residents. It would make it harder for businesses to start and expand due to high commercial property operating costs, while also making it more difficult for residents to attain and retain affordable housing, due to this substantial property tax increase.

Equally important is the need for the state to dedicate resources to coordinate homelessness and asylum seeker response services statewide. The challenges of finding housing, education, food and other essentials do not adhere to municipal boundaries, making state-level coordination crucial for effective resource allocation. This necessitates a whole of government effort, directing the Departments of Labor, Education, Economic and Community Development, and Health and Human Services to respond to these urgent needs in an organized manner. Simply providing one-time funding allocations, without implementing associated systems and investing in human capital at the state level, will not yield the sustainable, long-term solutions required to address the needs of these vulnerable populations. Legislative measures that address this need include LD 599, LD 787, and LD 1935, all of which have received favorable reports from their respective committees. Additionally, we look forward to the Legislature's further consideration of LD 1721 to establish transitional housing campuses.

While the aforementioned actions represent the necessary components of a long-term solution to these dire humanitarian needs, they also serve as an economic imperative for our state. Your administration's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy highlights the necessity of adding 75,000 workers to our workforce by 2030 to sustain our current levels of economic growth. We recognize that this growth is unlikely to come solely from Maine's natural born population, and therefore, arriving asylum seekers present the best opportunity to harness



PORTLAND
Regional Chamber
of Commerce

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chamber@portlandregion.com • PortlandRegion.com

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much-needed workers who possess the skills and credentials that align to our documented workforce shortages across various industries.

We deeply appreciate the dedication and leadership your administration and the Legislature have demonstrated in navigating our state through the global pandemic and challenges it has exposed in terms of housing, food, education, and workforce development. We have weathered these challenges together, and it is now time to reflect on the lessons learned over the past few years and set Maine on a sustainable course to effectively handle these challenges well into the future. We firmly believe that this can only be accomplished if the state commits the same level of leadership to address the key issues of general assistance reform and statewide coordination of asylum seekers and other individuals experiencing homelessness.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We eagerly await your support and look forward to working together to build a brighter future for the State of Maine.

Respectfully,

**Portland Regional
Chamber**
Quincy Hentzel
President & CEO

**United Way of
Southern Maine**
Liz Cotter Schlax
President & CEO

ProsperityME
Claude Rwaganje
Executive Director

MEMIC
Mike Bourque
President & CEO

MaineHealth
Andy Mueller
CEO

**Northern Light Mercy
Hospital**
Charlie Therrien
President

Bernstein Shur
Joan Fortin
CEO

**Hannaford
Supermarkets**
Mike Vail
President

Gorham Savings Bank
Steve deCastro
President & CEO

Mascoma Bank
Andrew Cook
SVP & Maine Market
Leader

Northland Enterprises
Josh Benthien
CEO

**Fathom
Companies**
Jim Brady
President

**Quality Housing
Coalition**
Victoria Morales
Executive Director

**Portland Foot and
Ankle**
Christina Long
Physician

City of Westbrook
Mike Foley
Mayor

**The Opportunity
Alliance**
Joe Everett
President & CEO

ConvenientMD
Celina Frost
Director of Compliance

State Theatre
Lauren Wayne
General Manager

In Her Presence
Abusana Micky Bondo
Co-Founder

**Vitalius Real
Estate Group**
Brit Vitalius
Principal

Diverse Anecdote, LLC
Karen D. Garnett
Principal

Portland Downtown
Gillian West
Board Chair

**Greater Portland Council of
Government**
Kristina Eagan
Executive Director