

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20510**

June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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

Dear Administrator Criswell:

We are writing in support of the application submitted by the Washington State Department of Social & Health Services (WA-DSHS) for funding under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Shelter & Services Program – Competitive (SSP-C) grant (NOFO # DHS-24-GPD-141-00-99). Last November, we wrote to you urging that your office make SSP funds competitively available to additional entities to help address the growing impact of the high number of arriving asylum seekers to communities across the country, including in Washington State. We were grateful for your response and that \$340.9 million was ultimately made available for competitive grants under the SSP-C grant.

As we noted in our November letter, starting in January 2023, a local church in King County opened its doors to provide shelter and support to asylum seekers and other immigrants arriving to the community. The church has become the de facto place of welcome for asylum seekers arriving to Washington State and is currently hosting approximately 350 people. Since we wrote our letter in November, several encampments of unhoused asylum seekers, including children and newborn babies, have also emerged. Local faith-based groups, non-profit organizations, and community members have raised funds to provide temporary shelter for hundreds of individuals, but they cannot keep pace with the number of newly arriving asylum seekers.

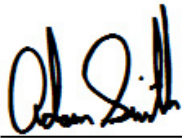
State and local government entities have worked to build infrastructure and to allocate funding to respond to the community's needs. In December, King County committed \$2 million to help house approximately 350 individuals at a local hotel for six months; in April, they distributed an additional \$2 million in assistance to community-based organizations to offer further support. In March, the Washington State legislature appropriated \$32.7 million to support asylum seekers with housing, food programs, education and employment support, and services for children, among other things. The distribution of funds to a network of local non-profit and community-based organizations will be administered by WA-DSHS starting in July.

WA-DSHS has a proven track record of successfully administering federal grants to serve immigrants who have recently arrived in Washington. Through its Office of Refugee & Immigrant Assistance (ORIA), WA-DSHS has administered grants from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement since the early 1980s and has helped facilitate the successful resettlement

of more than 150,000 people. They contract with local non-profit and community-based organizations for these grants, giving them a robust network of relationships on which they could draw for the administration of SSP funds.

Washington State is proud to offer generous support to all immigrants, including asylum seekers, and strives to be a welcoming place for new arrivals to the United States. Federal support for WA-DSHS's SSP-C application would offer critical support to our state and local governments, non-profits, and other community organizations working to ensure that asylum seekers have the shelter and care they deserve. It is for these reasons that we support the application by the Washington State Department of Social & Health Services (WA-DSHS) to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Shelter & Services Program – Competitive (SSP-C) grant, and we urge your fair and full consideration of their proposal.

Sincerely,



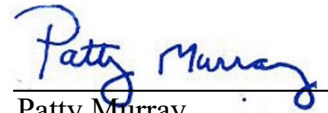
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Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



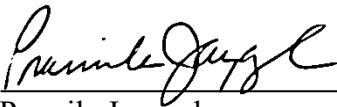
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Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



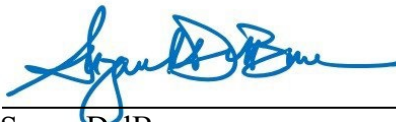
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Patty Murray  
United States Senator



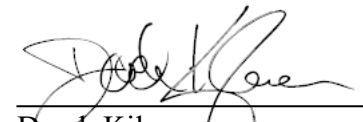
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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



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Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress



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Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress