

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 22, 2023

The Honorable Deanne Criswell  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Criswell:

We write to you today to express our urgent concern and request immediate action to support migrants in Colorado through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Shelter and Services Program (SSP). In light of the recent influx of migrants across the State, there is a pressing need for expanded support. It is crucial that all affected communities are eligible to apply to every funding tranche should new funds be appropriated.

Colorado has experienced a significant influx of migrants in recent months, which is placing considerable strain on state and local government resources and nonprofit organizations. These partners are at the forefront of providing essential services to migrants and are in dire need of additional support. Buses bringing migrants into our state are now a daily occurrence, and we are seeing a growing trend of migrants initially arriving in Denver and then moving into other communities across Colorado.

These surges have been especially challenging in Denver, with a total of 32,351 immigrants arriving in the city to date as of this week.<sup>1</sup> Texas Governor Greg Abbott has bused over 8,900 immigrants to Denver in the past seven months alone, exceeding the numbers sent to Los Angeles and Philadelphia combined. This influx has dramatically increased the number of individuals in shelters, which now exceeds 3,100, including approximately 1,200 children. The city has expended more than \$33 million in response to this humanitarian crisis and they expect that number to increase exponentially over the next year without additional support. Alongside Denver, other communities such as Aurora and Carbondale have also been significantly affected. Carbondale, a small rural community, has received approximately 125 migrants in recent months and, with the support of Colorado's Department of Local Affairs, plans to spend nearly \$225,000 to establish new, temporary shelters for migrants just for the winter. Unfortunately, to this point, the cost of temporary housing, food, transportation, and other necessities has largely fallen on Colorado taxpayers.

Once they arrive, migrants turn to local communities and nonprofits in search of refuge and assistance. However, the capacity of these organizations to provide adequate support is stretched thin. Nonprofits across Colorado, as well as state and local leaders, are concerned and seeking financial assistance and resources to meet the growing needs of these individuals.

In response to this critical situation, we strongly urge FEMA to:

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<sup>1</sup> City and County of Denver. (2023). Migrant Support in Denver. Retrieved from <https://denvergov.org/Community/Assistance-Programs/Migrant-Support>

1. Increase the funding allocated to the SSP in the fiscal year 2024. This increase is vital to adequately support the existing and emerging needs of migrants in Colorado.
2. Broaden the eligibility criteria for SSP funding. We request that eligibility be extended to additional cities and nonprofit organizations not previously funded in the 2023 cycle. This expansion is crucial in ensuring that all affected communities and organizations can access the necessary resources to support migrants effectively.
3. Provide technical assistance to communities setting up programs to meet the needs of migrants. The need for additional expertise is particularly acute in rural areas of Colorado, where small, capacity-limited local governments are seeking to establish these programs for the first time.

The situation in Colorado reflects a broader national challenge. As such, it is imperative that FEMA responds proactively to ensure that all communities facing similar crises have the opportunity to apply for and receive adequate support, should new funds be appropriated.

Your prompt attention to this matter is not just a response to a pressing need; it is essential to ensuring thousands of new arrivals facing harsh and unpredictable conditions have shelter and support throughout winter. We appreciate your consideration of this urgent request and stand ready to assist in any way to facilitate a swift and positive response.

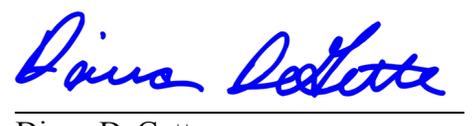
Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

  
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

  
John Hickenlooper  
United States Senator

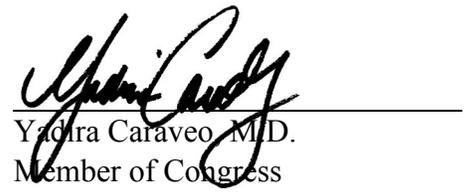
  
Jason Crow  
Member of Congress

  
Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



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Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



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Yadira Caraveo, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Brittany Pettersen  
Member of Congress