



Providing help and
creating hope in Maine

Testimony in Support of LD 2214
“An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of
State Government, . . . for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025”
Testimony specifically addressing Emergency Housing Relief Funds
February 23, 2024

**Most Rev.
Robert P. Deeley, J.C.D.**
President

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Senator Pierce, Representative Gere and Members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing. My name is Julie Allaire. I am Chief Program Officer at Catholic Charities Maine (CCM) overseeing programs for refugees and asylum seekers.

Jared des Rosiers
Chair

Stephen P. Letourneau
Chief Executive Officer

A year and a half ago, we began a pilot transitional housing program for asylum-seeking families funded by MaineHousing. Among other things, it helps participants find jobs and permanent housing. The model has three components. First, CCM directly provides on-site case management: enrolling people in benefits, English language classes, school and health care, etc. Second, we collect data and track key dates, including when participants are eligible to *apply* for work permits, and *begin* working. Third, we coordinate services from agencies providing specialized help with legal, employment and housing needs. Partners in this work include the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, Maine Immigration and Refugee Services, Department of Labor, Prosperity Maine and Quality Housing Coalition. MaineHousing contracts with 2 hotels where the program occurs - one in Saco and one in South Portland.

307 Congress Street
P O Box 10660
Portland ME 04104-6060

T. (207) 781-8550
F. (207) 781-8560

www.ccmaine.org

CCM supports the \$16 M proposed for the Emergency Housing Relief Fund in the supplemental budget which will allow transitional housing to remain open. Our data show it works and I'd like to share some results with you.

- The Saco program opened in July 2022 with a 300-person capacity. As families exit to permanent housing, *new* families enter. Through February 13, 2024, it has served 553 individuals (143 families, consisting of 281 adults and 272 children). Of these:
 - 53% of families (268 individuals (ind.) comprising 76 families) have exited the program; most into permanent housing. Average time in the program is now 3 months, and 8 new families (22 ind.) will enter in the next 2 weeks.
 - 163 people have obtained work permits. 100 are employed in hospitality, manufacturing, sales, construction and other industries. Another 100 are waiting to become eligible to apply for their work permits.
- The South Portland program began Oct 1, 2023 and has a 9-month duration. As participants exit, vacancies are *not* backfilled. Thru Feb 20, 2024, this site has served 228 individuals (75 households (HH)).
 - 71% of individuals (163 ind.) have already or will soon move into permanent housing. Of these, 66% (108 ind., 24 HH) have moved, and 34% (55 ind., 23 HH) are slotted to move by May 15th into identified units.
 - The pace of housing placements is accelerating. More than half-way through the program, only 29% of individuals (56 ind., 14 HH) remain to be housed, and we expect the program to conclude early.
 - 60% of households (45 HH) received their work permits while living in the program and 73% of permit holders are working.



We are witnessing that this pilot transitional housing model helps asylum seekers to become productive, contributing members of communities with efficiency and compassion. Our work is helping stabilize entire families and creating a secure and independent future for adults and children. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.