

Safe in Maine Fund: Overview

Today's Challenge

Asylum seekers have been coming to Maine in increasing numbers for the past four years. New people from across the globe will continue to arrive due to civil unrest, war, and climate shocks which have resulted in [100 million people being forcibly displaced](#) worldwide as of June 2022.

Here in Maine, we do not have a sustainable, cost-efficient way to provide temporary shelter to newly arrived families or transition them into permanent homes. In 2019 the Expo was used to shelter new arrivals because the Greater Portland region did not have enough housing space available. During the pandemic the housing shortage worsened. Today, over 300 asylum seeking families are living in hotels scattered across the region with insufficient cooking space, difficulty accessing needed services, and uncertainty that rooms will be available from month to month. And hotel shelter is very expensive, costing about \$7,000 per month per family and double that for a large family.

The State's Opportunity

We have an opportunity to resettle new families *today* and benefit from their contributions to our communities and our workforce *for a lifetime*. Maine needs workers, and communities need younger people. Many of the adults who are arriving are skilled. While asylum seekers must wait one year for federal authorization to work, Maine can immediately connect these new professionals to workforce training and job opportunities so they can contribute to the economy as soon as possible.

Safe in Maine's Goal

Safe in Maine's goal is to provide funding for transitional housing – an essential, and currently lacking, element of our housing stock. Intentionally developed, permanent, transitional housing will provide new arrivals to Maine with a safe and stable landing place while reducing our reliance on hotels and making much more efficient and effective use of limited taxpayer dollars. Further, dedicated transitional housing will provide the State with an essential resource for future workforce development, allowing new workers to relocate to the state for jobs while they seek permanent housing.

With the understanding that it may take multiple years for permanent transitional housing to be built, this fund first seeks to support the creation of temporary transitional housing which can be established and occupied as quickly as possible. This temporary transitional housing will serve as a bridge to the permanent transitional housing Maine needs to address its workforce shortages and do its part to assist the world's growing forcibly displaced population.

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The Fund's Uses

The Fund can be used in many ways to support the construction and operation of temporary or permanent transitional housing, including:

- Purchasing or leasing land or buildings
- Performing site work and providing infrastructure
- Constructing new or renovating existing buildings
- Creating outdoor spaces or play areas associated
- Creating interior spaces for individual and shared uses related to transitional housing such as: vocational, language, and life skills training; job training or counseling; on-site meetings with service providers, medical professionals, benefits administrators, or others

Once transitional housing is established, the fund can be used to support related costs such as transit/transportation, housing maintenance, and general assistance or educational services.

The Fund's Home

The Safe in Maine Fund will be administered by the Center for Regional Prosperity (CfRP), a charitable Maine 501(c)3 non-profit corporation affiliated with the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG). GPCOG is a Regional Planning Organization, a Metropolitan Planning Organization, and an Economic Development District that works to strengthen local governments, bring them together to address local and regional concerns, and promote prosperous, equitable, and sustainable communities.

How to Contribute

Municipalities are encouraged to contribute to the Safe in Maine Fund. Individuals can make a tax-deductible contribution to the Fund. Checks can be made out to the Center for Regional Prosperity and mailed to:

The Center for Regional Prosperity
Safe in Maine Fund
970 Baxter Blvd, Suite 201
Portland, Maine 04103

You can also donate securely online at: [\[link to be provided once established\]](#)

For more information

Please visit the Safe in Maine Fund page at: [\[link to be provided once established\]](#)
At the Greater Portland Council of Governments, please contact: Belinda Ray, bray@gpcog.org