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COMMUNITY BOARD No. 2, MANHATTAN

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April 5, 2023

Hon. Eric Adams
Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Gary P. Jenkins, Commissioner
Department of Social Services
150 Greenwich Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Adams and Commissioner Jenkins:

At its Full Board meeting on November 17, 2022, CB#2, Manhattan (CB2, Man.), adopted the following resolution:

A resolution in support of assistance to the recent wave of asylum seekers

WHEREAS:

- 1) Over 21,700 asylum seekers - primarily but not exclusively from Venezuela - have been processed by New York City since the spring of 2022. The principal agencies involved – but not the only ones - are Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA). As of this writing, 16,200 recent asylum seekers are still in the care of DSS, and DSS has opened 57 emergency shelters to fulfill the legal and moral mandate of New York City to provide shelter to anyone seeking it. Two Humanitarian Emergency Relief Centers have opened, managed by Health and Hospitals and the New York Office of Emergency Management. These are on Randall’s Island and in The Row Hotel on 8th Avenue, where families with children are being housed; and
- 2) As one of the country’s self-proclaimed “sanctuary cities,” New York City provides supportive services without regard to immigration status; does not report information to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); provides counsel through MOIA; and allows immigrants to have a municipal ID; and
- 3) The city views the current wave of newcomers as a refugee crisis more than an immigration issue, the United Nations refugee agency (UNHRC) having cited the displacement of over 7 million people from Venezuela.¹ The city is addressing the crisis

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/venezuela-emergency.html>

with its existing infrastructure and staffing, and is also accepting support from private organizations; and

- 4) Under normal circumstances, asylum seekers arriving at the borders of the United States either enter illegally and seek family members, or turn themselves in to agents of US Custom and Border Patrol (CBP), which conducts background checks, health inspections, etc. Families are not separated, but arrivals are categorized by household type. Children traveling alone fall under the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. CBP connects asylum seekers to local community-based organizations (CBOs) that in turn help connect them to family members or other sponsors who pay for transportation to other cities. The current wave of Venezuelan asylum-seekers, however, has limited ties to the U.S. Texas Governor Greg Abbott has taken to offering free bus rides to those arriving from the country's southern border and, without notifying receiving cities, encouraging migrants to leave Texas and go to Washington, DC; Chicago, IL; and New York, NY, which explains the massive influx of migrants to NYC and why so many arrive needing shelter; and
- 5) The needs of this population will not be prioritized over those of the city's homeless and its existing immigrants. Without US citizenship, migrants are still ineligible for many services afforded to the city's domestic homeless population of approximately 50,000. They lack documentation that would expedite access to housing or SNAP food benefits, for example. Their duration in shelter is thus difficult to estimate. Once assigned to a shelter, children are being enrolled in school. Adults vary in terms of language and professional skills but do not yet have permits to work, and the city is providing legal assistance as it does to the existing immigrant population and is advocating for expedited work permits; and
- 6) The 57 "emergency shelters" used to house the current influx of migrants are primarily private hotels throughout all five boroughs that enter into short-term contracts with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). These tend not to be congregant settings. They can come into service quickly and temporarily and do not require a "fair share" analysis or the long process required for bringing long-term shelters online. Communities are given minimal notice of their opening; and
- 7) There are no current plans to site emergency shelters in Community District 2 but that could change at any time. Some local groups and elected officials within CD2 are already engaged in support efforts.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT COMMUNITY BOARD 2, MANHATTAN

- 1) Appreciates the heroic efforts of the city to welcome and support the current influx of migrants; and
- 2) Supports the allocation of city funds and expediting of hiring processes to permit the responding agencies to continue their work with appropriately scaled staffing; and
- 3) Welcomes the opportunity of CB2 to share in the care and housing of this population; and
- 4) Hopes that lessons derived from the urgency of this crisis can be applied to improve conditions and processes for existing immigrants in our city and our domestic homeless population.

Vote: Unanimous, 44 Board Members in favor.

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Jeannine Kiely, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Susanna Aaron, Chair
Human Services Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

JK/BG

c: Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Carolyn Maloney, Congresswoman
Hon. Nydia Velazquez, Congresswoman
Hon. Brian Kavanagh, NYS Senator
Hon. Brad Hoylman, NYS Senator
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, NYS Assembly Member
Hon. Yuh-Lin Niou, NYS Assembly Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member
Hon. Christopher Marte, NYC Council Member
Hon. Carlina Rivera, NYC Council Member