



August 22, 2023

President Joseph Robinette Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As the leads of the NYC Pandemic Response Institute, we write urging you to provide New York City with additional resources to address the migrant and asylum seeker crisis it is facing. The NYC Pandemic Response Institute is a public-private partnership designed to support NYC to prepare for, respond to, and recover from major public health threats– from infectious disease to climate-related health emergencies - by bringing together all sectors of society.

Over 100,000 migrants have arrived in New York City since the Spring of 2022 and hundreds more arrive daily. The City of New York has opened 193 shelters, including 13 humanitarian emergency relief and response centers to provide temporary housing, food, health services, case management, legal counseling, and linkages to other services. This surge in the number of migrants and asylum seekers and their many needs exceed the available resources, including providing these women, men and children with shelter. The cost of what has been provided so far exceeds \$3.5 billion and is expected to reach \$12.25 billion by 2025.

This is a profound public health and humanitarian emergency of the kind that federal disaster assistance was designed to alleviate. Federal resources authorized by executive power would enable a robust response to meet the urgent needs and help avoid a public health crisis. Specifically, we ask that you support the requests of Governor Kathy Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams by declaring this crisis a disaster via the Stafford Act. Once declared, we ask that you:

- Extend the Temporary Protected Status Program to expedite the ability of migrants and asylum seekers to receive work permits to ultimately enable them to support themselves and their families.
- Establish United States Customs and Immigration Services Support Centers in New York City to provide essential wraparound services, including legal support, housing, food, and more and reduce the burden on the humanitarian emergency relief and response centers which are at present at maximum capacity.
- Provide access to federal buildings and land for the operation of shelters, and their construction when necessary. Floyd Bennett Field and the Gateway National Recreation Area, for example, have been used in prior emergencies.





- Release additional FEMA funding of at least \$4 billion to cover the ongoing and increasing expense New York City incurs.

There is great urgency to use the full array of legal tools the federal government has at hand to address emergencies such as the current situation; the suffering has certainly reached that threshold.

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. El-Sadr". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Wafaa El-Sadr, MD, MPH, MPA
Professor of Epidemiology and Medicine
Director, ICAP at Columbia University
Lead, NYC Pandemic Response Institute

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ayman El-Mohandes". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ayman El-Mohandes, MBBCh, MD, MPH
Dean
CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy
Lead, NYC Pandemic Response Institute