

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

March 9, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

At the request of officials representing Portland, Maine, I write to obtain information about how the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) is continuing to facilitate the movement of asylum seekers to Portland, even when the City no longer has the resources or accommodations necessary to provide services to these individuals. I request that DHS take prompt action to prevent the situation in Portland from worsening.

State and local officials have reported to me that many asylum seekers in Portland identified municipal government addresses—including social services offices or emergency shelters—as their ultimate destination when they first arrived at the southern border. Those individuals were allowed entry into the country, and in many cases were provided with transportation to Maine, without any confirmation by DHS as to whether the locations identified can accommodate these individuals.

As a result, the City of Portland—a city with a population of fewer than 70,000—is currently sheltering approximately 1,100 people per night and is under constant pressure to expand emergency shelters and other services, with the only alternative being to turn away vulnerable individuals, families, and children. Perhaps most troubling, the surge of asylum seekers in Maine now means that housing facilities are beyond capacity and Mainers in need of shelter have nowhere to go.

I request that, going forward, DHS verify all destination addresses prior to allowing entry into the country, thereby ensuring that asylum seekers have a safe, reliable destination, and that municipalities are not stretched beyond capacity.

Moreover, as Congress exercises its oversight responsibilities, considers potential legislation, and reviews appropriations requests, I request responses to the following questions by March 24, 2023.

1. To what extent is DHS currently verifying the legitimacy of destination addresses for asylum seekers arriving at the southern border? Has this process changed over time?
2. To what extent is DHS assessing a destination's ability to accommodate additional asylum seekers before facilitating or permitting the movement of asylum seekers to that location?
3. Is DHS, directly or indirectly, facilitating the transportation of asylum seekers to destinations without confirming whether the destination can accommodate those individuals?
4. For each of the past five years, how many asylum seekers have presented themselves at the southern border who have identified an address in Maine as their final destination?

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Maine communities have done their part to assist asylum seekers in need, but these communities are strained far beyond their capacity. Allowing additional asylum seekers to travel to Maine without confirming that these individuals will have a place to sleep is irresponsible and could lead to a tragedy. I urge you to take immediate action to prevent that from happening.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator