



October 6, 2022

The Honorable Eric Adams
Mayor of New York City
New York City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Eric Adams:

We write to you as elected representatives of communities across New York City to ask that you reconsider your position on Humanitarian Emergency Relief & Response Centers (HERRC) for newly arrived asylum seekers. After several days of inclement weather, it is clear that the refugee camp model the City is attempting to implement is inadequate and goes against our New York values. As temperatures drop, it's both unsafe and inhumane to house asylum seekers outside in tents, whether at Orchard Beach or on Randall's Island. Below, we outline a series of steps the City should take to assist newly arrived asylum seekers until they find permanent housing.

As more and more buses arrive, there is a glaring need for a processing facility to welcome asylum seekers. Neither an outdoor tent encampment nor the Port Authority can adequately serve this purpose. We strongly encourage your administration to consider the Jacob Javits Center as a welcome center and resource hub. The Javits Center's proximity to the Port Authority would allow asylum seekers to be processed more efficiently. It's well-equipped and large enough to enable service providers to deliver the resources currently available at the Navigation Center in midtown Manhattan. We believe that the need to provide humanitarian services far outweighs the potential economic impact.

Rather than doubling down on building temporary housing structures in exposed, outdoor spaces, the City's highest priority must be creating more housing options for newly arrived asylum seekers. The City must decrease the average length of shelter stays for all New Yorkers, which has ballooned in recent years due to unnecessary barriers to permanent housing placement and a lack of investment in stable, deeply affordable housing. While we acknowledge CityFHEPS has a considerable backlog, the City should still expand CityFHEPS eligibility to asylum seekers and other non-citizens. We must also remove the 90-day limitation on the use of CityFHEPS to allow people to immediately begin searching for permanent housing. To ease pressure on the shelter system, we urge the administration to increase staffing capacity at the NYC Commission on Human Rights and the Department of Social Services. With more staff, the Commission and Department could get through the backlog of CityFHEPS and Section 8 discrimination cases expeditiously, which would help move current shelter residents into more stable housing and free up shelter beds for asylum seekers.