

## **Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid Network Condemns the Passing of the Migrant Services and Supports Emergency Act, As It Excludes People From Homeless Services Based on Immigration Status**

Washington, DC. Sep 22, 2022 — On Tuesday, Mayor Bowser's Migrant Services and Supports Emergency Act passed in the council, along with minor amendments introduced by Councilmember Nadeau. This legislation will create the Office of Migrant Services (OMS). Which, despite being housed under the Department of Human Services (DHS), will have an entirely "separate stream" of services for newly arrived asylum-seekers, but details of said services are minimal in the legislation and absent for migrants who remain in the district longer than thirty days.

Additionally, Title II of the legislation passed this week [includes provisions](#) that specifically exclude migrants from accessing DC's homeless services by amending the Homeless Services Reform Act (HSRA). Title II redefines residency to exclude countless migrants, including people in Section 240 proceedings and people who have immigration check-ins and appointments outside the district (this would apply to almost everyone since the Washington ICE Field Office is located in Virginia). Without residency, many migrants in DC will be prevented from accessing DHS services, including eviction prevention. **Councilmember Pinto introduced an amendment to remove these harmful provisions, but the amendment failed, with only Councilmembers Pinto, Lewis-George, Silverman, and Gray voting yes.**

"The Migrant Services and Supports Act reads like a bill introduced in May, not a bill written after five months of buses arriving in DC," said Alejandra S. Sky, an organizer with the Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid Network. "Councilmembers repeatedly mentioned the urgent need to pass the bill during the vote. Yet, it's hard to believe that after five months of waiting, the DC government couldn't wait a few more days to ensure that their legislation is not harmful to migrant communities."

Furthermore, the Act fails to acknowledge the long-term needs of migrants who have chosen to make the district their home. **For months Mayor Bowser has pushed the false narrative that no migrants want to resettle permanently in DC.** Now, with this legislation she is formalizing this narrative. "Mayor Bowser's legislation will create a new Office of Migrant Services, yet it only seems to focus on what services migrants are excluded from, not what they are entitled to," said Amy Yi, also with the Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid Network. "By once again failing to acknowledge the needs of the migrants who choose to stay, the Mayor has made it abundantly clear that she will continue to provide no sanctuary in this city."

The Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid Network, our dozens of community partners, and hundreds of volunteers continue to support more than 800 migrants who have settled in DC. **We have organized since the first bus arrived in the city to provide a strong, coordinated response.** We are deeply concerned that, after five months of waiting, with hypothermia season just around the corner, Mayor Bowser's legislation outlines no long-term support or wraparound services for our new neighbors.

Families who came to DC on the buses are already struggling to access services that would help them secure long-term housing and stability. **Valerie, who came on a bus from Texas and has been staying at the Days Inn, cited the lack of childcare as the reason her family can't look for work.** In standard DHS family shelters, caseworkers connect parents to childcare options that allow them to work and therefore eventually move to other long-term housing.

"At the center of Christian faithfulness to Scripture is the command to love and welcome the stranger, regardless of country of origin," said Rev. Stephanie Vader, Senior Pastor at Capitol Hill UMC. "Mayor Bowser's legislation will create a system that explicitly separates access to services based on immigration status and national origin, in an attempt to pit recent migrants against long-term DC residents. The nearly 800 migrants who have chosen to make DC their home have the right to establish roots here, build community, and thrive. There is no sanctuary in exclusion."

**###**

*The **Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid Network** is a coalition of dozens of community and faith-based groups and hundreds more volunteers who have been mobilizing since April 2022 to welcome migrants arriving to the DMV.*

**Contact:** sanctuarydmv2017@gmail.com