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State Provides Update on New Landing Zone, Shelter Site for Asylum Seekers

State continues to strategically invest in infrastructure for new arrivals following an influx during holidays

CHICAGO—The State of Illinois is continuing to make progress on a data-driven approach to improve the asylum seeker response with a new intake center and shelter site set to launch this month. The State is also announcing another extension of its food services contract at City of Chicago shelter sites to allow the City additional time to complete its procurement.

LANDING ZONE: The State’s new intake center will be co-located with the City of Chicago’s bus landing zone to maximize efficiency, with six heated tents now under construction at the site and expected to open in the coming weeks. The site will connect new arrivals with wraparound services and help those with sponsors or an alternate final destination along on their journey. The State has been funding New Life Centers of Chicagoland and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago to provide support at the bus landing zone, outside, as of early November. Through this support, to date, over 2,500 individuals have been reunited with family or friends rather than entering the shelter system. With the new, heated intake center, the State will expand staffing and services, with data indicating the number of new arrivals requiring shelter can be reduced by 10%.

SHELTER: Work also continues this week on the 220-person shelter located in Little Village at the site of a former CVS. Meanwhile, the State is also partnering with New Life Centers to operate a temporary shelter at a Chicago hotel to support families that arrived during the recent holiday uptick. Those staying at this temporary shelter will transition to the shelter in Little Village, which is expected to open this month. The State is continuing to work with the City to determine where State resources can best be targeted to support additional shelter capacity.

FOOD SERVICES: In December, the State and the Greater Chicago Food Depository announced a \$4 million investment to provide meals to asylum seekers at City of Chicago shelter sites through the end of the calendar year. The funds were announced as the City worked through delays in its procurement process. Due to continued delays in



this process, the State is further extending its shelter-food contract through January 15 at an additional cost of \$2 million. On January 15, the City will assume responsibility for feeding asylum seekers in City shelters.

“The State is determined to use its limited resources as efficiently as possible, helping asylum seekers settle in Illinois and achieve independence,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “We will continue to ensure that they are met with dignity and compassion, while we call for increased coordination and funding from the federal government to provide a federal solution to this federal challenge.”

The need for the temporary hotel shelter arose when more than 60 busses were sent to Illinois from Texas between December 20-27, with nearly 2,500 new arrivals. Busses have been sent outside of Chicago, to Northern Illinois cities, such as Aurora and Elgin, without any coordination, putting the well-being of new arrivals at risk. The State has partnered with the City to provide guidance to impacted municipalities and support transportation of new arrivals to the landing zone in Chicago. Over the New Year weekend, Texas sent a plane to Rockford with more than 350 new arrivals.

“At IDHS – we have a message for all Illinoisans – no matter how long they have lived here: Help is here. We take that message very seriously and we are on the frontlines to provide wraparound services and support to our new arrivals,” **said Dulce M. Quintero, IDHS Secretary Designate**.

As the border continues to see a significant increase in arrivals – many of whom will make their way to Illinois – the State continues to work with the City on strategic and data-informed planning, absent a federal-government coordinated response and funding.

These latest investments are part of the more than \$160 million investment, via IDHS, that the Governor announced last November to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis presented by the arrival of nearly 30,000 asylum seekers from the U.S. Southern Border.

This announcement builds on \$478 million in State funding that has been provided or committed to the asylum seeker response over FY 2023 and 2024. This includes direct funding to the City of Chicago and other municipalities assisting asylum seekers as well as substantial State funding for shelter, food, medical care, rental assistance, and wraparound casework and services. The State of Illinois is also making targeted, data-driven investments to alleviate bottlenecks in the asylum seeker pipeline.

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