

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
MAINE

359 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
(202) 224-5344
Website: <http://www.King.Senate.gov>

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 17, 2014

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
BUDGET
INTELLIGENCE
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Secretary Silvia Mathews Burwell
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell:

The influx of unaccompanied alien children on our southern border of the United States is a humanitarian crisis that we must rise to meet. While this exodus of child refugees from Central America is at the forefront of our minds, we must remember that, for the first time since World War II, there are now more than fifty million displaced people globally. This is not just a humanitarian crisis; this is a human crisis. These are mothers, fathers, children who have fled unspeakable violence, war, and extreme poverty.

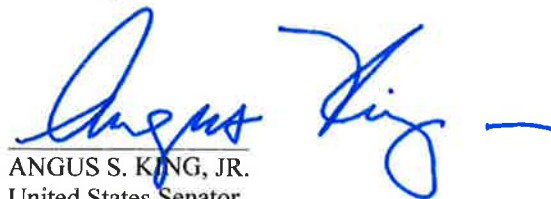
The flight of these people is the fruit of many dark hostilities around the world which, unfortunately, have been pushing refugees and asylum-seekers from their homes to safer nations long before the crisis on our southern border. My state, Maine, is the new home for many of these people. As you know, refugees and asylees were often doctors, engineers, and lawyers in their home country and now must rely – for a transition period – on training and assistance from the government to begin their new lives.

I write to seek further information regarding proposed reprogramming of funding for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). I am concerned for the 3,000 refugees who have resettled in Maine in the past five years, as well as the large population of asylum-seekers. I understand that the humanitarian crisis at the southern border is forcing tough decisions, but I remain troubled by the extent to which ORR funding changes will negatively impact the lives of Maine refugees and by extension, Maine communities, municipalities, and the State. While Congress must provide more funding for ORR, current funding should not be redirected away from vulnerable populations.

It is my understanding that reprogramming could have a severe impact by pulling money away from programs including Refugee Social Services, state discretionary grant funding, Refugee School Impact Grants, Funding for Services for Older Refugees, Refugee Health Promotion, and Survivors of Torture. This would be a major loss to Maine communities – including the possible closure of the City of Portland's Refugee Services Program – and will force vulnerable and frequently traumatized populations to rely on public assistance while not receiving critical mental health, case management, and integration services. I trust you will oversee any reprogramming with careful consideration for both current and future refugees, and that any reprogramming absolutely necessary for ORR to fulfill its responsibilities will be restored with any forthcoming emergency supplemental appropriations.

I would like to receive information that you can provide regarding how reprogramming within ORR will adversely affect Maine. In the meantime, I will do my part here in the Senate to act on the Administration's supplemental request so that you have adequate funding to address the southern border crisis without taking funding away from other vulnerable populations. Thank you for your timely attention to this matter. Please have your staff contact Chris Rauscher in my office for follow up.

Sincerely,



ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator

AUGUSTA
4 Gabriel Drive, Suite F1
Augusta, ME 04330
(207) 622-8292

PRESQUE ISLE
169 Academy Street, Suite A
Presque Isle, ME 04769
(207) 764-5124

SCARBOROUGH
383 US Route 1, Suite 1C
Scarborough, ME 04074
(207) 883-1588