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To: Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager  
From: Jennifer Mathews, Executive Director  
Date: March 21, 2022  
Re: Awaiting Report No. 21-69

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This memorandum has been prepared in response to Awaiting Report No. 21-69/Policy Order O-3 dated October 18, 2021, regarding the feasibility of creating a uniform process for aiding the resettlement of refugees in Cambridge. For reasons explained below, there are external barriers to creating a truly uniform process by which the City aids refugee resettlement. However, the Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship (CIRC) will continue its work to assist refugee and/or immigrant residents resettling in Cambridge in the most consistent and equitable way possible – regardless of their immigration status, national origin, race, or other characteristics.

“Refugees” may arrive in Cambridge from many different countries, including Afghanistan and Haiti, as recognized explicitly in the Council Order. Given the tragic recent developments in Eastern Europe, we may also see additional new arrivals from Ukraine. New residents may also come to Cambridge from various other countries, or under circumstances, that do not always garner national news attention or afford them immigration protections. The ability to proactively coordinate around refugees’ arrival and resettlement in Cambridge differs significantly depending on federal treatment/classification of their home country.

Only those who meet very specific criteria are eligible for resettlement through the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program. This program involves the federal and state governments, partnering with nonprofit resettlement agencies, and it provides eligibility for a number of benefits. It is feasible to create a more uniform process to assist individuals and families coming to Cambridge through the Refugee Resettlement Program, and the Commission will work with appropriate partners to do so. Those who are *not* eligible for the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, though, are unlikely to arrive in Cambridge through any formalized process. This limits CIRC’s ability to identify individuals resettling in advance of their arrival. CIRC can, however, work with City and community partners to assist these individuals more consistently and uniformly after they arrive in Cambridge.

#### **Additional Coordination for Refugee Resettlement Program Arrivals**

Many individuals currently arriving from Afghanistan are proceeding through the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program. The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program is open to other eligible populations as well, but there is a particular focus on coordinating services for Afghan arrivals. To better participate and aid in this process, CIRC is joining quarterly consultation meetings with the state Office for Refugees and Immigrants. CIRC is also joining an Afghan/Haitian Benefits Working Group, organized by colleagues in Boston’s Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement (MOIA). This working group receives regular

updates from the state's nonprofit Resettlement Agencies, including information on where new arrivals from Afghanistan will be placed.

Through these connections, CIRC aims to make earlier contact with those coming to Cambridge through the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program. CIRC can in turn connect new arrivals to key City and community resources more quickly.

### **Additional Coordination around all Newly Arrived Refugees and Immigrants**

While most Afghan arrivals are proceeding through the federal resettlement process, this is not the case for many other new arrivals. For example, new arrivals from Haiti are not currently supported through the federal resettlement process in the same manner as new arrivals from Afghanistan. Additionally, while persons from Haiti, Afghanistan, Ukraine and additional countries may be eligible for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), providing them with certain time-limited immigration protections, TPS designation does not itself establish any sort of resettlement structure. Moreover, individuals who don't meet the legal definition of a "refugee", who may not qualify for asylum or TPS, or whose immigration status is uncertain will still arrive in Cambridge. And each person or family's needs will be unique.

New immigrant residents first connect with the City in many different ways. CIRC staff regularly meets with other City departments to share information and resources. CIRC has been working to specifically strengthen connections with other groups that often serve as a point of first contact for immigrant residents, including the Department of Human Service Programs' Community Learning Center, Community Engagement Team, and Multi-Service Center, Cambridge Public Schools' Family Liaisons, and the Cambridge Public Libraries. Through these connections, key City staff can share information and best practices, more effectively refer residents for services, and potentially identify trends.

Additionally, CIRC has developed a New Resident Overview resource. The goal is for this New Resident Overview to serve as a quick reference for any new arrivals in Cambridge; providing information on key, Cambridge-specific resources in the service areas most commonly needed by new immigrants. This resource was developed with direct input from CIRC Commissioners, all of whom are immigrants or work for immigrant-serving organizations. While this resource will not in and of itself create a more uniform resettlement process for refugees in Cambridge, it can provide immigrant residents – and other members of the Cambridge community assisting them – with an overview of resources, and allow CIRC to make warm referrals for the individual or family's specific needs.