Date: January 27, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members  From: Jan Lesher
Pima County Board of Supervisors   Acting County Administrator

Re:  Response to Supervisor Steve Christy’s Questions Regarding Aid to Asylum Seekers during the January 18, 2022 Board of Supervisors Meeting

Background: Aid to Asylum Seekers and Recently Evicted Individuals and Families

In response to early 2021 surging numbers, Pima County partnered with City of Tucson and Catholic Community Services (CCS) to provide food and shelter to U.S. southern border asylum seekers released by United States Department of Homeland Security agencies (USDHS). Unlike this partnership’s response to the 2019 asylum seeker surge, the 2021 response has had to additionally address the compounding crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore the addition of non-congregate shelter for COVID-positive and COVID-exposed individuals.

Asylum seekers released by USDHS are dropped off at Casa Alitas Welcome Center (CAWC), located in three converted pods at the Pima County Juvenile Justice Complex. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 are transported to the Red Roof Inn/Tucson South (RRI), which is under contract between Pima County and Jot Properties. At RRI, COVID-positive individuals quarantine and their exposed family members isolate. They are provided meals and medical services as needed until they can travel safely to their sponsorship families in other parts of the U.S.

The number of asylum seekers released by USDHS can vary widely day-to-day and week-to-week. Pima County therefore has additionally contracted with Jot Properties for Comfort Suites to provide rooms for COVID-negative asylum seekers when USDHS release surges exceed CAWC shelter capacity.

In order to achieve cost efficiency for emergency shelter provision, Pima County is serving two different COVID-negative populations at Comfort Suites: 1) U.S. southern border asylum seekers released by USDHS; and 2) Pima County individuals and families who have been recently evicted. Half of the eighty (80) rooms at Comfort Suites are reserved to accommodate surging numbers of COVID-negative asylum seekers, and the remaining forty (40) rooms are reserved for individuals and families who have been recently evicted and referred for immediate need of shelter to the Pima County Department of Community and
Workforce Development Department (CWD). Service to the latter population at Comfort Suites will begin in early February 2022.

In order to achieve cost efficiency for emergency food provision, Pima County Grants Management & Innovation Department (GMI) worked with Pima County Procurement Department (Procurement) to develop the scope of services for Solicitation No. IFB-PO-2200048 for Food Services for County Congregate and Non-Congregate Shelters—i.e., CAWC, RRI, and Comfort Suites. Relating to this solicitation, the Pima County Board of Supervisors approved the recommendation by Procurement to award Master Agreement No. MA-PO-22-084 to World Dining, LLC at the January 18, 2022 Board meeting.

Request

During discussion of the above Master Agreement at the January 18, 2022 Board meeting, Supervisor Steve Christy, District 4, requested County staff compile total costs incurred and people served to-date relating to humanitarian aid provided to both asylum seekers and recently evicted individuals and families at CAWC, Red Roof Inn/Tucson South, and Comfort Suites.

Numbers Served To-Date

Since March 2021, Pima County has experienced a steady increase of U.S. southern border asylum seekers released by USDHS agencies to CAWC. From March 1, 2021 through the end of January 2022, 24,240 individual asylum seekers will have been served by the Southwest Border operations partnership of Pima County, City of Tucson, and Catholic Community Services.

The number of recently evicted individuals and families served by CWD case managers at Comfort Suites cannot yet be determined since this project will not begin formal operation until early February 2022.

Costs To-Date

Since the beginning of the 2021 asylum seeker surge, GMI has worked closely with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) to procure critical funding to defray costs incurred by the Southwest Border operations partnership of Pima County, City of Tucson, and Catholic Community Services (GMI is the FEMA EFSP fiscal agent for the entire partnership). FEMA EFSP revenue awarded thus far totals $7.9M.

Table 1 is a breakout of all actual costs for the provision of humanitarian aid to asylum seekers (March 1 through December 15, 2021).
Costs incurred for aid provided to recently evicted individuals and families served by CWD at Comfort Suites are not included in the below table because, as stated previously, this project will not begin formal operation until early February 2022.

Table 1. Asylum Seeker Humanitarian Aid Costs Incurred March – December 15, 2021*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL COSTS – Asylum Seeker Humanitarian Aid</th>
<th>Actual Spending by Category (March 1 - December 15, 2021)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOUSING - Casa Alitas Welcome Center</td>
<td>$175,736.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSING - HOTELING</td>
<td>$3,483,612.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOOD - Hotels and CAWC</td>
<td>$425,317.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL MEDICAL</td>
<td>$516,378.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL STAFFING COSTS</td>
<td>$628,925.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRANSPORTATION (long-distance)</td>
<td>$131,734.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSPORTATION (short-distance)</td>
<td>$200,405.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>$2,414.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL COSTS</td>
<td>$5,564,523.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Costs in the table above include sheltering of individuals (at CAWC, RRI, and other “surge” hotels and motels used as needed), food, medical care (including, but not limited to, COVID-19 testing, and COVID-19 vaccination), staffing, security and transportation (both intra-city, and from ports of entry statewide). Please note cost data for the table ends December 15, 2021 because costs through this date have been reconciled. There is typically a 30-day lag between GMI receipt of invoices and reconciliation (i.e., the GMI fact-checking process to determine cost verifiability and allowability for allocation against grant revenue). In the go-forward, if the Board requests, GMI can share regular updates of reconciled costs relating to humanitarian aid provided to both asylum seekers and recently evicted individuals and families at CAWC, Red Roof Inn/Tucson South, and Comfort Suites.

Upcoming Funding: Food/Shelter for Asylum Seekers and Recently Evicted Individuals and Families

USDHS releases of asylum seekers to CAWC are forecasted to continue throughout 2022. GMI will therefore continue to monitor funding opportunities through FEMA EFSP and other federal sources. Costs incurred to support aid to recently evicted individuals and families will be defrayed using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Coronavirus Local Recovery Fund (CLFRF) revenue. The amount of funding for the latter project (“Emergency Housing
Support”) is set at $2.95M, which was approved by the Board at the December 21, 2021 meeting (Addendum 1, Item 5, “Revised American Rescue Plan Act, Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA CLFRF) Spending Plan/Budget”).

**Conclusion**

Through Pima County partnerships with City of Tucson, CCS, and federal program leadership at FEMA EFSP, over 24,000 asylum seekers have been safely processed through Pima County since the beginning of the current surge crisis in early 2021. Additionally, these partnerships have been integral in the mitigation of COVID-19 spread, thus assuring public health and safety recommendations are met. These partnerships in tandem with robust, ongoing internal communication and logistics management across several County departments – spearheaded by Pima County Office of Emergency Management – have resulted in safe respite and passage for asylum seekers through Pima County. The County will leverage this operational experience and achieve cost efficiencies as it adds an additional at-risk population – recently evicted individuals and families – into its program matrix for emergency food and shelter.

JKL

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
   Francisco Garcia, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer, Health and Community Services
   Regina Kelly, Director, Grants Management and Innovation Office