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ONGOING COSTS OF MIGRANTS IN THE DENVER METRO REGION

AUTHORS: DJ SUMMERS, JIMENA SANCHEZ

ABOUT COMMON SENSE INSTITUTE

Common Sense Institute is a non-partisan research organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of Colorado's economy. CSI is at the forefront of important discussions about the future of free enterprise and aims to impact the issues that matter most to Coloradans. CSI's mission is to examine the fiscal impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans are educated and informed on issues impacting their lives. CSI employs rigorous research techniques and dynamic modeling to evaluate the potential impact of these measures on the economy and individual opportunity.

TEAMS & FELLOWS STATEMENT

CSI is committed to independent, in-depth research that examines the impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans are educated and informed on issues impacting their lives. CSI's commitment to institutional independence is rooted in the individual independence of our researchers, economists, and fellows. At the core of CSI's mission is a belief in the power of the free enterprise system. Our work explores ideas that protect and promote jobs and the economy, and the CSI team and fellows take part in this pursuit with academic freedom. Our team's work is informed by data-driven research and evidence. The views and opinions of fellows do not reflect the institutional views of CSI. CSI operates independently of any political party and does not take positions.

INTRODUCTION

Since December 2022, Denver became a major destination for migrants arriving through the southern border from South and Central American countries. About 42,000 migrants have arrived in the Denver metro area since December 2022, about 1,800 of which have now been authorized to work as a result of city-led efforts. The city estimates roughly half have remained in the metro area.ⁱ The Common Sense Institute estimates city, education, and healthcare organizations have spent an estimated \$216 million to \$340 million on the response to feed, clothe, shelter, and provide educational and healthcare services.

The countries with the most significant number of people entering the U.S. are primarily Venezuela, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. As recorded by the City of Denver's contracts with non-profit organizations, state government, and federal government, the migrants arriving in the city have been met with an abundance of resources that have further catalyzed the crises being faced by Denver metro school districts and hospitals.

KEY FINDINGS

- City, education, and healthcare costs for migrants since December 2022 total an estimated \$216 million to \$340 million.
- School Districts
 - › In total, since December 2022, the 17 school districts in the Denver metro area have had a combined growth of 15,725 migrant students.
 - 44% came from Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.
 - › Denver Public Schools saw a growth of 5,322 migrant students, 55% of whom were from Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.
 - This is 6% of the 2023-24 DPS student enrollment, or 3% from the five listed countries alone.
 - › At \$14,100 in instruction support per studentⁱⁱ, the number of students the Denver metro school districts absorbed from the five countries will cost \$98 million.
 - › The total cost to Denver metro schools related to new migrant students is \$98 million to \$222 million, which would equate to 1-2% of the total state K-12 education budget for the 2024-25 academic year.

- Hospitals
 - > In the Denver metro area, hospitals spend about \$2,931 in uncompensated care per migrant.
 - > Emergency departments have delivered an estimated \$48 million in uncompensated care to migrants.
- City of Denver
 - > The City has spent about \$71 million on all support services. These include but are not limited to:
 - Facilities and hotels for temporary shelter
 - Housing assistance up to six months of rent
 - Transportation
 - Food distribution
 - Childcare

IMPACT ON DENVER METRO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Schools in the Denver metro area will need to spend between \$98 million and \$222 million on migrants to date. With a \$9.7 billion state budget approved for the 2024-25 academic year, this would equate to 1-2% of state education spending.

It is difficult to determine how many of the students born outside the country are related to the recent border surge beginning in December 2022. CSI based its estimates on data provided by the school districts. This data encapsulated how many enrolled students were born outside the U.S. and enrolled after December 2022.

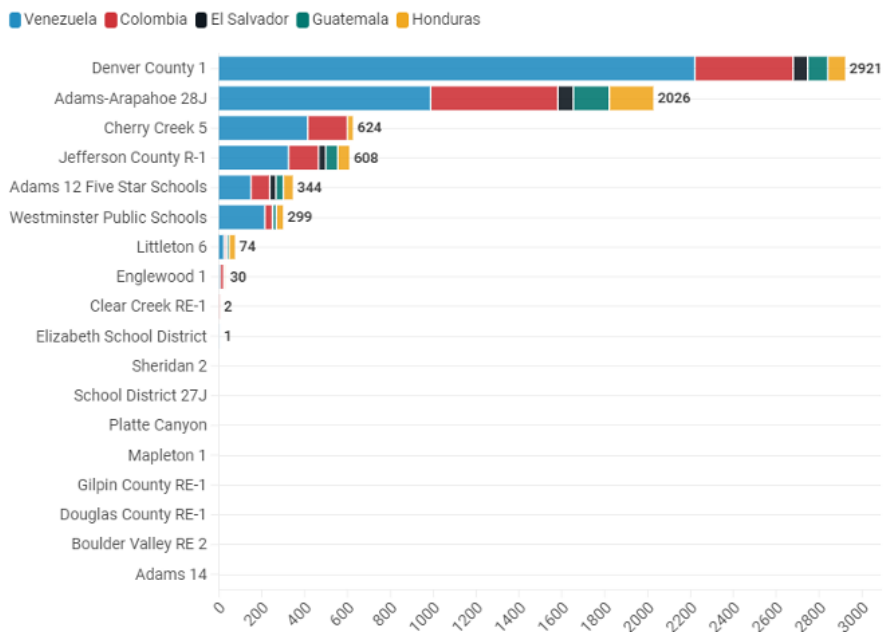
CSI made two estimates. One based on all students from other countries, and one based on students from Venezuela, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Refugees and asylum seekers from these five countries are largely responsible for the border surge since December 2022.

Denver Public Schools has reported roughly 3,500 students matriculated from the border surge since December 2022. CSI's data analysis falls within this range.

Since December 2022, 15,725 migrants from all countries have enrolled in the Denver metro school districts. Previous CSI reporting estimated the per student cost of instruction and support in the Denver metro to be \$14,100 per year, or \$222 million in total.

FIGURE 1

Enrollment of Migrant Students in Denver Metro School Districts



Source: Denver metro school districts



The recent border surge and ensuing influx into Denver are largely from Venezuela, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. About 6,929 of the 15,725 migrants that enrolled in the Denver metro school districts are from these five countries. On the migrants from these countries alone, schools are spending about \$98 million on instructional spending.

The migrant population has not remained only in Denver. Of the migrant children enrolled after December 2022, over half are in districts other than Denver Public Schools.

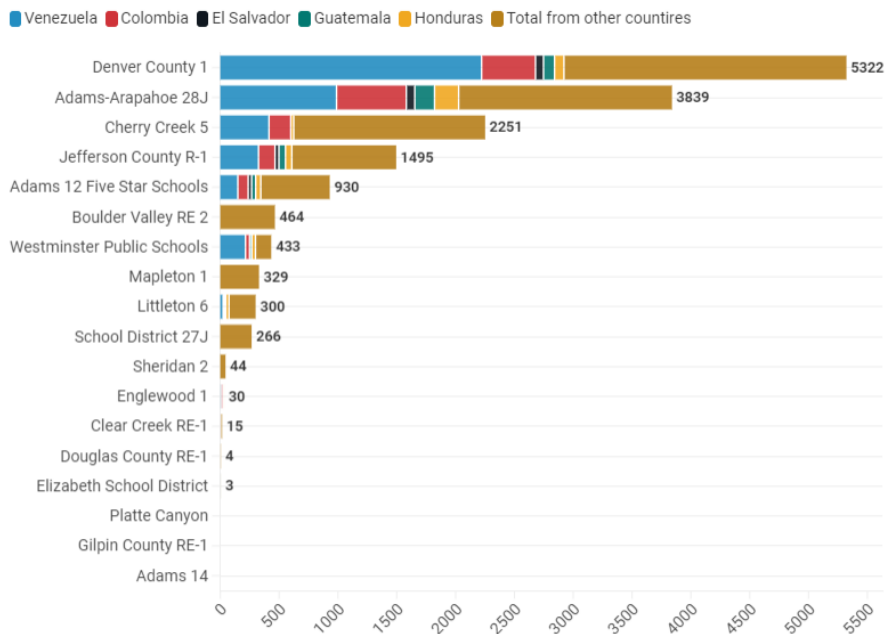
Denver Public Schools has the highest share of students born outside the nation, 5,322 in total. Of them, 2,921 were born in the five countries listed above. Aurora Public Schools has enrolled 3,839 in total and 2,026 from the five countries listed above. Other districts have enrolled sizable numbers of students from the same five countries, including Cherry Creek schools (624), Jefferson County schools (608), Adams 12 Five Star Schools (344), and Westminster Public Schools (299).

Newly-arrived migrants from the five listed countries comprise 5% of the student body in Aurora Public Schools, 4% of the student body in Westminster Public Schools, and 3% of students in Denver Public Schools.

Newly-arrived migrants from all countries comprise 10% of the student body in Aurora Public Schools, 6% in Denver Public Schools, 6% in Westminster Public Schools, 5% in Mapleton 1, and 4% in both Cherry Creek Public Schools and Sheridan 2.

FIGURE 2

Enrollment of Migrant Students in Denver Metro School Districts



Source: Denver metro school districts



HEALTHCARE SYSTEM COSTS

The uncompensated care to migrants in Denver area hospitals is estimated to cost \$123 million to providers for care received at emergency departments. Immigrants tend to have a higher proportion of uncompensated care visits when compared to U.S.-born individuals due to the lack of health insurance.

As with student absorption, healthcare costs are observably not limited to Denver alone. UCHealth, which does not have a campus in Denver, reported migrant-related uncompensated care delivery.

Based on numbers released by UCHealth, cost to providers for uncompensated care of migrants is about \$2,931 per visit.ⁱⁱⁱ

CSI estimated the number of likely visits to emergency departments based on length of stay and migrant arrival projections.^{iv} This assumes one emergency department visit per year. With 16,272 visits to Denver metro emergency departments from December 2022 to the present, providers have delivered \$47,692,887 of uncompensated care to migrants.

CITY OF DENVER COSTS

To date, the City of Denver has spent an estimated \$70 million in migrant response goods and services, administered partly by the city and partly by non-profit organizations.^v During the height of the migrant influx in January 2024, officials estimated Denver was going to spend \$180 million through 2024.

With daily arrivals now much lower, the city revised its estimate to a projected \$90 million in migrant response spending through 2024. To fund the response, the City of Denver has made use of federal funding from existing programs, city grant programs, and from cuts to city budget items.

To fund the estimated \$90 million in funding through 2024, the Denver City Council faced a requested \$45 million cut, \$17 of which came from public safety agencies including Denver Police Department (\$8.4 million) and Denver Fire Department (\$2.5 million).

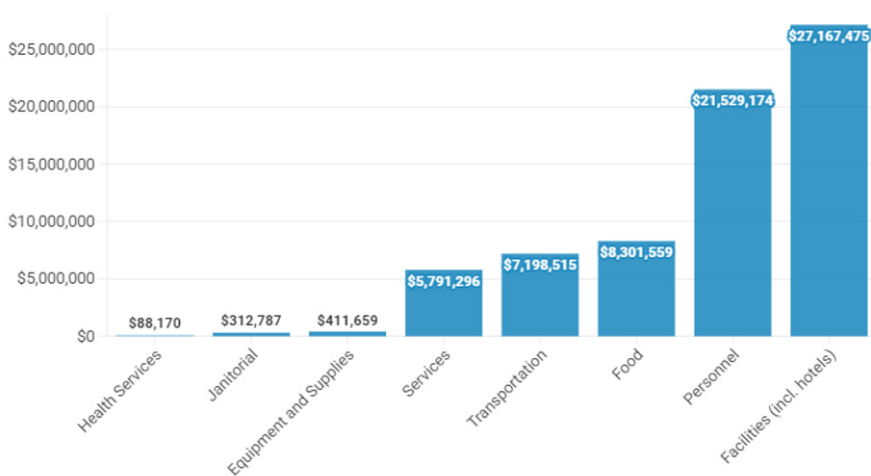
The city has spent \$70.8 million to date on migrants response. These are broken into eight categories: equipment and supplies, food, personnel, transportation janitorial, facilities (including hotels, services, and health services.

Over two-thirds of the spending (69%) has been for shelter facilities and personnel, while food and services together represent another 20%. Health services represent the smallest category of migrants spending at 0.1%.

The city has distributed \$5.3 million to non-profits. About 72% (\$3.8 million) of that funding has gone to ViVe, a non-profit that works to address health equity in Denver’s underserved communities through wellness and education. \$2.9 million of ViVe’s funding was awarded through the Healthy Food for Denver’s Kids grant program.

FIGURE 3

City of Denver Expenditures for Migrants Response
December 2022 to Date



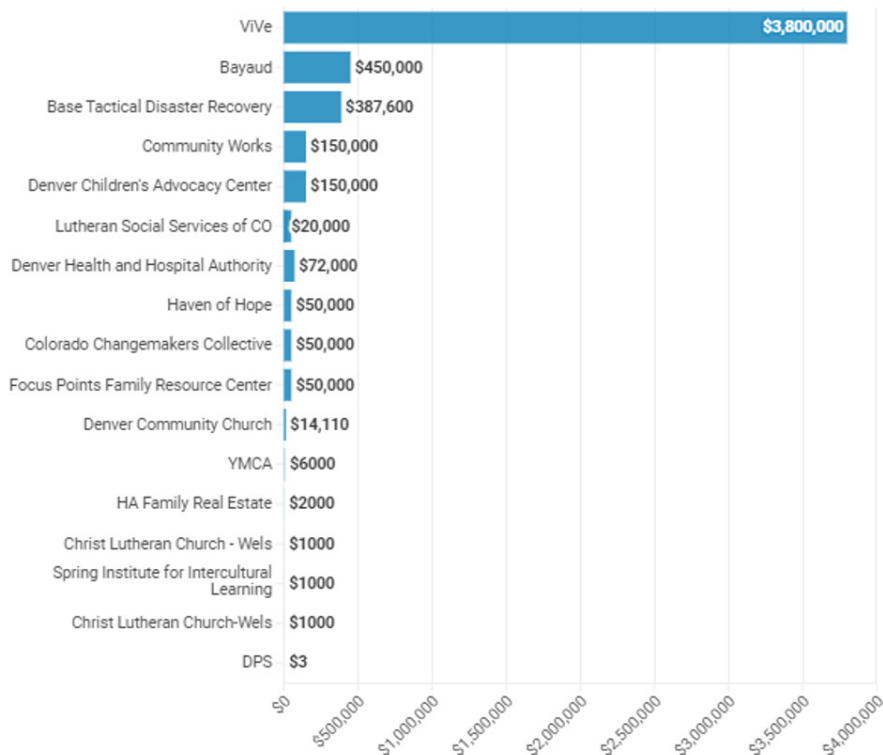
Source: City of Denver



The City of Denver has received sizable funding from the state of Colorado and the U.S. government. This includes \$13 million in Head Start Program funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, \$8.6 million in Federal Emergency Management Agency funding from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, \$1.5 million from the U.S. Department of Local Affairs, and \$909,000 from the National Board for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program.

FIGURE 4

Denver Non-Profit Grants from City of Denver for Migrant Response

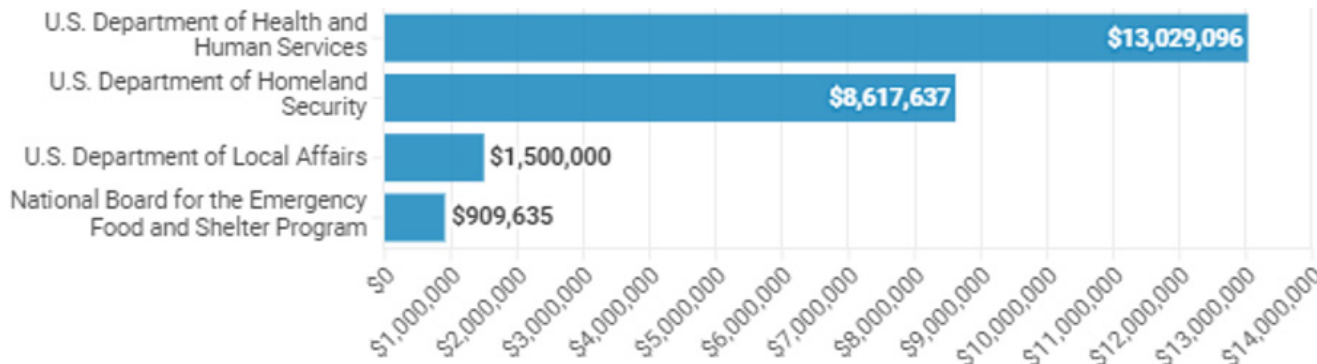


Source: City of Denver



FIGURE 5

Federal Funding for City of Denver's Migrant Response



Source: City of Denver





BOTTOM LINE

As the city's daily arrivals of migrants has slowed, the city has had a chance to recover, fine-tuning its response and lowering its estimated spending. Even as that spending is revised, however, non-city expenses for education and health are beginning to stack up. Work authorization programs have managed to secure over 1,800 authorizations for unauthorized migrants in Denver. In the meantime, however, both the city and its institutions are spending on necessities including food, transportation, shelter, education, and healthcare.

SOURCES

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- iii. https://denvergazette.com/news/uchealth-uncompensated-care-for-immigrants-soars/article_b28aa6d2-c6a6-11ee-86a0-2fc25444995e.html
- iv. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7733155/>
- v. <https://www.denver7.com/news/local-news/denver-advocacy-group-immigrants-protest-citys-new-immigration-strategy>