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*****PUBLIC STATEMENT*****

**Statement of Lt. Governor Molly Gray on “Freedom and Unity Vigil” and
Humanitarian Assistance for Ukraine**

Montpelier, Vt. — This evening, Lt. Governor Gray released the following statement on the “Freedom and Unity Vigil” and the signing of H.717, allocating humanitarian aid for Ukraine:

“In moments like this, it is easy to feel helpless and hopeless watching the suffering of innocent civilians several time zones away in Ukraine. Putin’s actions not only threaten the very institutions and laws Russia and the international community came together to establish after World War II to prevent human suffering, but also international peace and security as we know it.

Tonight’s vigil and the signing of H.717, an appropriation of more than \$640,000 in humanitarian aid to support the people of Ukraine is more than just a bipartisan act of kindness, it is an act of unity as Vermonters, Americans, and citizens of the world.

No matter our differences, tonight we stand united as Vermonters with Ukraine. We also stand united against Putin’s heinous, barbaric and unrelenting attack on Ukrainian sovereignty and the Ukrainian people.

Having worked for the International Committee of the Red Cross, an organization mandated to support and assist victims of armed conflict, I’ve witnessed, firsthand, the extreme impact of war on civilians, particularly women and children.

Today, UNHCR reports more than 2.9 million refugees fleeing Ukraine, including unaccompanied minors and families in need of emergency shelter, blankets, and food. I’m hopeful this aid can help meet some of those needs and serve as a model for what other states across this country might consider.

Our support for Ukraine cannot end with this contribution, however. We must continue to prepare for the arrival of refugees, readying our communities and working with our Congressional Delegation to advocate for urgently needed reforms to refugee policy.”

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