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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA

CHAIRMAN, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRMAN, TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION

SENIOR MEMBER, HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

www.chrissmith.house.gov

May 2, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
H-310, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Member Cartwright,

I write to respectfully request Community Project Funding in fiscal year 2025 for the Historic Manitou School House Rehabilitation, Township of Berkeley, Ocean County, New Jersey, 4th Congressional District located at 167 Third Avenue, Toms River, NJ 08757.

The historic Manitou Park School House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Built in 1929, the schoolhouse served only African American students and is the only remaining building in the township with ties to segregation and the broader civil rights movement, serving as a testament to social, educational, and architectural progress over time. The renovation project involves comprehensive repairs, including structural restoration, interior and exterior renovations, and upgrades to meet current safety standards. Key components include roof repairs, weatherization, and restoration of historically significant features. Previous work, funded by the New Jersey Historic Trust and the Neighborhood Preservation Program, included asbestos remediation and design elements.

The Historic Manitou School House Rehabilitation project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds as it is in keeping with the stated goals of the Community Development Block Grant program, being a project with a clear economic benefit. The project will restore this blighted site which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and it will save this cultural landmark so future generations can learn of the significance of this site in the civil rights

movement. Furthermore, the restored schoolhouse will act as a multi-purpose community center, and it will promote tourism to Berkeley Township and Ocean County.

The project is shovel ready with engineering and architectural plans in place, which have been paid for by the Township of Berkeley at a cost of roughly \$500,000. The total cost of the remainder of this project is \$1,890,073, and the amount of this request for Community Project Funding is \$1,490,073. The Township of Berkeley is prepared to pay the outstanding \$400,000.

The project has overwhelming support from the New Jersey Historic Trust, Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission, and local stakeholders, commissions, and residents within Berkeley and nearby South Toms River. The project has a federal nexus authorized by Chapter 42 U.S.C. Section 5305 (a) (4).

This renovation and restoration project will provide greatly needed economic development by promoting tourism. The Manitou Park School House is located in a Qualified Census Tract, adding significant economic value to the surrounding community by revitalizing an area that has suffered from economic decline.

Rehabilitation of the Manitou Park School House will also create a center for learning and community activities, providing space for historical education and serving as a vibrant community hub.

Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of my request for assistance for the Historic Manitou School House Rehabilitation, Township of Berkeley, Ocean County, New Jersey project. I appreciate the Committee's due consideration of the proposal.

I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress