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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL EXECUTIVE
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CHAIRMAN, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL
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COMMISSION

SENIOR MEMBER, HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

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March 31, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
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 Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Granger, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member Quigley,

I write to respectfully request Community Project Funding in fiscal year 2024 to fund *Lakewood Study Square (LSS) Land Acquisition for **Connections Regional Senior Center*** in Lakewood Township, Ocean County, New Jersey, in my Congressional District (NJ-04).

The Connections Regional Senior Center is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds as it is in keeping with the stated goals of the Community Development Block Grant program by meeting a compelling local need for the purposes of establishing a public senior center. This handicapped accessible senior center will be located in Lakewood, and will provide services to seniors from Lakewood, Howell, Toms River, Manchester, Jackson, and the surrounding areas, all which fall within my congressional district. This program has a federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized by Chapter 42 U.S.C. Section 5305(a)(1).

The fastest growing municipality in the state, Lakewood, NJ is the fourth largest city in New Jersey. Over the past two decades, the Township's population has grown by 124% (from 60,000 in 2000 to 135,000 in 2020). Keeping pace with the growth, Lakewood's senior population has also enlarged dramatically. The way the seniors desire to congregate has expanded: whereas seniors were previously concentrated in senior "villages" and "communities" which often had community rooms serving each small community privately, the senior population in Lakewood and the surrounding areas seeks integration with other seniors from outside a few-block "village" setting and with the community-at-large. Surprisingly, though

Lakewood is a large city, it has no senior center to provide group programming or congregate meals and services to its burgeoning senior population.

Therefore, the LSS Connections regional senior center will seek to close the current gap in services for seniors and provide: congregate meals and other nutrition services; health and wellness; gym equipment and exercise classes; information and referral and case management programs for government and other programs and services addressing seniors' basic needs; personal development programs and therapeutic creative modalities such as art classes and talent clubs; educational classes and programs, and a host of other services designed to help bolster seniors and keep them mentally, emotionally and physically active. The goal is to enable seniors to gather with peers in a congregate setting as they continue to live in their homes, thus helping to preserve their quality of life.

This request for \$4 million from the HUD Economic Development Initiative/CDBG account is for 100% land acquisition to purchase a multi-acre parcel of land on which to construct the senior center. Through a public-private partnership, LSS will leverage County and local government funding and private philanthropic funding to cover the construction costs for the center, which are projected to be an additional \$6 million, for a total project cost of \$10 million.

This project takes advantage of considerable community support including from county, township, and state officials, as well as local social service agencies. LSS is also partnering with the Lakewood Community Services Corporation (LCSC), which has decades of experience providing social service and mental health programming to the Lakewood community, including HUD CDBG funded programs and economic development programs, and which provides some 78,000 meals on wheels to homebound Ocean County seniors each year. LSS and LCSC will partner with Ocean County to incorporate funding for senior Congregate Meals into the planned Senior Center. LSS will work closely with Lakewood Township's CDBG coordinator to ensure that the project is implemented in accordance with HUD's community development priorities and procedures.

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

Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of my request for assistance for the Connections Regional Senior Center land acquisition. I appreciate the Committee's due consideration of the proposal.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress