

**CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

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By Appointment



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

April 28, 2021

CO-CHAIRMAN, TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

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The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Subcommittee  
House Committee on Appropriations  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Subcommittee  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

I write to respectfully request Community Project Funding for the **Learn, Grow, Thrive Academic Support and Enrichment Program** at the Hamilton Area YMCA, a critical pillar of community life in New Jersey's Fourth Congressional District.

The Hamilton YMCA, which has served the children and families of Mercer County for decades, has been a key component of New Jersey's efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the unemployment rate of Hamilton Township alone stands at 17%, compared to 7.7% in the state as a whole, and many in the community are suffering from food insecurity.

The YMCA—which typically gives out around half a million dollars in financial aid during a normal year—has continued and expanded its programs to meet this unprecedented need, including through distributing food and providing COVID-safe child care for the children of essential workers.

The Learn, Grow, Thrive Program is a critical part of the Hamilton community's effort to recover from these compounding public health and economic emergencies. It is designed to help students at local schools—which remain mostly virtual—transition back to in-person learning and recover any academic, social, or emotional loss that may have occurred during this very difficult time.

Eligible students are enrolled in grades K-8 at one of Hamilton Township's 13 schools, which are highly diverse, with more than half of students at 8 schools being children of color. Additionally, two are Title I schools, and four other schools have more than 30 percent of students utilizing a free or reduced lunch program. In terms of performance, more than 50% of Hamilton's schools fall in the bottom half in New Jersey's public school rankings, and many

expect students' performance to continue to decline due to pandemic-related educational disruptions.

The highly-trained program staff in the Live, Grow, Thrive Program seek to fill these educational gaps. With a student-to-faculty ratio of 3:1, students receive the attention and mentoring they need to improve academic performance, while also improving social and emotional skills—especially critical during this time of online learning and social isolation.

Specifically, the program includes academic support and tutoring in language arts, math, and science, following the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards. Students also receive mental health support, physical and health education, and enrichment classes in art, music, yoga, and dance.

The total cost for which I am requesting funding is \$193,189, to be spent in fiscal year 2022. Of this amount, \$138,189 would be used to pay 13 homework teachers, \$25,000 would be for food, \$15,000 for supplies, and \$15,000 for fees.

This project is broadly supported by the Hamilton Community, including by New Jersey State Senator Linda Greenstein, New Jersey State Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo, and State Assemblyman Daniel Benson, who have written letters of support attached to this application.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please contact Christian Henniger at 202-225-3765 or [Christian.Henniger@mail.house.gov](mailto:Christian.Henniger@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress