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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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April 20, 2022

The Honorable David E. Price
Chair, Subcommittee on Transportation, and
Housing and Urban Development, and Related
Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member, Subcommittee of
Transportation, and Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart :

I write to urge you to support funding for a proposed **Mobile Farmers Market** project to help address significant food insecurity affecting a large low-income elderly community in Manchester Township, Ocean County, NJ., which has one of the largest concentrations of the elderly in the country.

The project sponsor is INSPIRE-NJ, an established charitable non-profit organization that already runs a foodbank and a hot meals kitchen in Manchester Township. INSPIRE-NJ (<https://inspire-nj.org>) has worked with local farmers and the Farmers Against Hunger for a decade.

INSPIRE-NJ is seeking \$188,300 to bring nutritious foods—free of charge—directly to the elderly, many of whom are housebound and with limited financial means. There is nothing similar to this innovative effort on the East Coast. The new refrigerated van will operate four days a week to assist with the distribution and delivery of fresh produce and proteins (eggs, dairy, and meats) to food insecure elderly.

The mobile project will compliment and build upon the current work of INSPIRE-NJ in coordination with Ocean County and the County's USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). A new warranted vehicle would fulfill INSPIRE-NJ's mission of providing nourishment and hope to the hungry without interruptions.

The project is strongly supported by the County leadership and social services officials.

As an added benefit, INSPIRE-NJ also plans to use the program to train young adults on the autism spectrum in marketing and customer service skills, as they will have the opportunity to help stock the van, advertise the program and interact with these senior citizens.

Manchester has a population of 45,115, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. While its 2020 data shows that 16.6% of the New Jersey population is age 65 or older, **Manchester's population percentage for the same age group is 49.6.** Further, the median household income in Manchester is only about half the state's average. Many elderly who live in one of the 25 modest retirement communities live in single households, are not working, no longer drive, and rely solely on their Social Security income to pay their expenses.

Feeding America, an organization which has been fighting hunger in America for 40 years, reports that 63 percent of the elderly visiting food banks like INSPIRE-NJ's food bank say they must choose between food and medical care.

INSPIRE-NJ's food bank—which I have visited on-site—would be the mobile farmer's market center of operations. It is headquartered in the lowest income area in the Manchester Township. Within a six-mile radius from where the food truck will be operating are **22,000 seniors—almost half the town's total population—and 89 percent of them are deemed low income.** It is also a vast town, 629 square miles of rural setting, indicating that a mobile food service has many advantages over a fixed site in bringing healthy, nutritious food to needy seniors at no cost.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project to fight hunger among the elderly. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

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

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress