

Produce to the People Sample Letter

[SAMPLE LETTER] – [Fill in the brackets with appropriate information]

Dear [SECRETARY/SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE] [LAST NAME],

I am contacting you with regards to the rejection of the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Grant proposal of the USDA for FY23 submitted by Hunger Task Force in Milwaukee, WI. The proposal titled “Expanded Produce Access Through Fresh & Local Markets” would have provided a continuation of funding for fresh and healthy produce access programs delivered directly to SNAP participants, via Hunger Task Force in partnership with other community stakeholders.

Our community cooperative, Outpost Natural Foods (www.outpost.coop), is one such community stakeholder. Through their partnership with Hunger Task Force, they offered a program titled “Produce to the People” which allowed for SNAP (FoodShare) participants the opportunity to purchase fresh produce at one of four retail Outpost locations in the metro Milwaukee area at a 50% discount. GusNIP funding was applied to offset the loss to the retail partner, in essence making the co-op a bridge for SNAP participants to have access to fresh produce at any time of the year. This is especially important during the non-growing months of the year when local farmers markets are not in operation.

Since the inception of “Produce to the People” in April of 2022, Outpost has helped program participants save more than \$435,000 through more than 265,000 transactions on the purchase of fresh and healthy produce, much of this during a significant period of high food costs related to inflation. This is a tremendous success that has helped SNAP participants purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables!

I know our co-op, as I shop there. I am also an owner. Part of the mission of a co-op is to serve its community. Through their sustainability reporting, I know that on average 19% of the fresh produce sold at Outpost comes from Wisconsin and regional Great Lakes states. Through the purchase of fresh produce via “Produce to the People” farmers in our area have benefitted and helped to feed those who are food insecure. Isn’t building a resilient food system that offers consumers “affordable, nutritious food grown closer to home” the point of the USDA?

I am deeply disappointed that national program leaders Pascale C. Jean and Mallory M. Koenings could not find it in the best interests of the residents of Wisconsin to renew GusNIP funding to Hunger Task Force. In fact, there were no Wisconsin-based programs to receive GusNIP funding in the FY23. Considering the vulnerability of so many people who are food insecure in the metro Milwaukee area, not having access to fresh and healthy produce throughout the year at a greatly discounted price will influence the overall health and well-being of people who would truly benefit from this opportunity.

[ADD YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE WITH THE PROGRAM, IF APPLICABLE]

I would appreciate a response and I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE]

[PHONE NUMBER]

[EMAIL ADDRESS]