

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

January 26, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-138 The Capitol
Washington D.C., 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-138 The Capitol
Washington D.C., 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

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

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Chairwoman Granger, Vice Chair Collins, and Ranking Member DeLauro,

As the United States Senate and the House of Representatives continue their negotiations to finalize the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) appropriations package, we implore you to substantially increase the funding for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) through the U.S. Department of Treasury's Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Fund as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is imperative we increase the funding for this program above the \$1 million allocated in Senate bill S.2131, Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2024, and the complete absence of funding within the House version of this same funding bill to the \$25 million total we requested in March 2023. HFFI is an incredibly effective and popular program that is consistently oversubscribed and underfunded.

Nearly 40 million Americans live in low-income rural, urban, or tribal communities where they cannot readily access fresh, healthy and affordable food. These same communities often struggle with high rates of unemployment and poverty. Rural communities are particularly impacted by high rates of food insecurity with 87% of the counties with the highest rates of food insecurity in the United States being designated as rural.¹ HFFI provides a comprehensive model for addressing limited and inequitable access to affordable and nutritious food by providing one-time loan and grant financing to build grocery stores, mobile markets, food hubs, and other fresh food

¹ <https://www.cobank.com/web/cobank/knowledge-exchange/food-and-beverage/how-delivery-innovation-can-reduce-hunger-in-the-heartland>

enterprises in underserved areas and enable existing stores to renovate and/or expand so they can stay open and provide the healthy foods communities want and need. In addition to improving access to healthy food, HFFI creates jobs, generates tax revenue, catalyzes economic activity and establishes new market opportunities for our nation's farmers.

HFFI utilizes a public-private partnership model, fostering solutions that are locally determined, and encouraging strategies that build from the ground up. For example, CDFIs have the expertise and capacity to leverage HFFI dollars with capital from public and private sources, including state and local government, banks, health care and philanthropic institutions. This enterprise level funding has enabled CDFIs to be at the forefront of efforts to bring greater access to healthy foods in low-income communities.

Since 2011, over \$300 million in grants have been awarded from HFFI programming, which in turn have leveraged over \$1 billion in healthy food investments. The funds have supported diverse projects in 46 states that have successfully created jobs, transformed communities and improved access to healthy food. Additionally, several states and metropolitan areas have launched financing programs to bring fresh and healthier foods to their communities, including Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Federal HFFI resources have been instrumental in launching many of these efforts and will play a critical role moving forward.

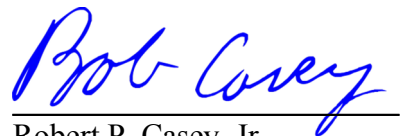
We appreciate your leadership in investing in equitable access to healthy food and community revitalization to date, and ask that you work to further ensure our nation's underserved rural, urban, and tribal communities have increased access to affordable, healthy food by providing the requested \$25 million for both CDFI and USDA HFFI programs. We understand the pressure you face as you continue to negotiate the final FY24 appropriations package, but we ask you prioritize funding for HFFI as you complete your work.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

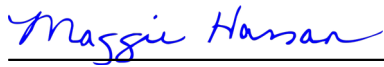
Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



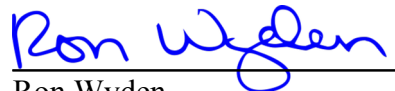
Peter Welch
United States Senator



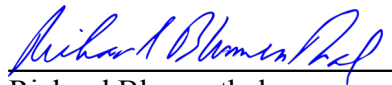
Eaphonza Butler
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator