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Return receipt and Email

March 17, 2021

Director Thomas Arnone  
Monmouth County Board of Commissioners  
Monmouth County Hall of Records  
One East Main Street  
P.O. Box 1255  
Freehold, NJ 07721

*Re: Life-Sustaining Support for the Underserved*

Dear Director Arnone and Commissioners:

The one-year anniversary of the pandemic is a time of reflection and prospection for Fulfill, formerly the FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties. Almost instantaneously with the shut-down of the state, we saw a 40 percent increase in the demand for food with a corresponding increase in cost of 250 percent. Pre-pandemic, Fulfill served 136,000 food insecure people, including 50,000 children. Today, we feed 215,000 people, including 70,000 children. And, of those we currently serve, approximately 50 percent of these men, women, and children are Monmouth County residents.

Eighty-seven percent donor funded, Fulfill depends upon the generosity of individuals, corporations, foundations, and government. Without this collective support, we could not meet the spike in demand and help ensure that no one goes to bed hungry. Over the past year, Fulfill has provided **3.3 million** more meals to the food insecure in Monmouth County than we did the prior year at a cost of **\$4.7 million**. This includes 1.1 million meals to Long Branch; 1.2 million to Asbury Park; 303,140 to Neptune; and, 460,443 to the County seat of Freehold Boro and Township – to name a few. The increase in the number of meals Fulfill served to these communities alone ranges from 29 percent to a high of 190 percent when compared with those served pre-pandemic.

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At the beginning of the pandemic, we also established a restaurant program that provides a stipend to local restaurants to feed the hungry. The stipend acts as a small business award, keeping restaurant employees off the food bank line and businesses open, while also feeding the hungry in your county. As of today, we have funded \$ 1,299,249 to Monmouth County businesses through this essential feeding program.\*

Furthermore, Fulfill provided grants throughout the crisis to help increase capacity at our 141 pantries and emergency food programs in Monmouth County. In the last year, Fulfill provided *at no cost* food, PPE, tents, heaters, refrigerators, freezers, and other goods so that the emergency feeding programs could reopen and expand their capacity. The total of these grants to date is over \$1,000,000.

A full list of all the services we have provided to our Monmouth residents during this pandemic is attached.

Recognizing the service Fulfill was providing to its underserved residents, last summer Ocean County invited us to apply for CBDG/CARES Act funding. The funding was specifically intended to help offset the cost of providing meals to Ocean's hungry residents during this crisis. Graciously, Ocean County provided \$355,258 in a CBDG/CARES Act grant last fall.

While talking to Ocean County, Fulfill had similar talks with Monmouth. We were told such funding was not available under the CARES Act. In an effort to show how CARES Act funding was, in fact, available, Fulfill sent a copy of the final Ocean County grant award to Commissioner Kiley. Sadly, notwithstanding the availability of grants like the Ocean County award, **no** CARES Act funding was awarded by Monmouth County to Fulfill.

As the need in Monmouth County continues to be high and as the County considers the use of the next round of federal funding, Fulfill asks that the food insecure of Monmouth County not be forgotten. We look to the County to follow the lead of Ocean not only to help mitigate the cost of the additional meals provided over the past year by Fulfill, but also to help our underserved communities with food this upcoming year.

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\* This amount does not include the recently announced State Sustain and Serve Grant Program.

Specifically, we respectfully request a total grant of \$725,000. This support, which is barely 12% of what Fulfill spent on meals and support for Monmouth County residents *last* year, will allow us to continue to meet the needs of our hungry neighbors, and your residents, into the future.

Should you like additional information on all that Fulfill is doing for Monmouth County residents or have questions, I am available at your convenience.

On behalf of the entire Fulfill family and those we serve, we thank you for your consideration.

With much gratitude,

Kim Guadagno  
President & CEO  
Fulfill, formerly the FoodBank of Monmouth & Ocean Cos.  
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*The FoodBank is now Fulfill*  
*A Comprehensive Approach to Ending Hunger in Our Communities*

cc: Deputy Director Susan Kiley	Commissioner Lillian Bury
Commissioner Nick DiRocco	Commissioner Ross Licitra
Congressman Frank Pallone	Congressman Chris Smith
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