

## **Testimony From Judith Clark Women Who Care Ministries**

Greetings President Albornoz, Vice President Glass and Councilmembers:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify of the criticality, value, power and needs of our “*Helping Kids Eat Weekend Meal Program*”. A mission very dear to our hearts is ending child hunger. For 21 years, we have provided safety net services to the community, especially through this program. During the height of the pandemic, we distributed 7,000 weekend meals to kids each Friday, in continued partnership with MCPS via the curbside grab-and-go model! When schools re-opened in September, we resumed our original model of direct service to the schools.

We ask that you close the gap of the **\$621,250** additional funds needed to provide weekend meals to the 2,500 students already on our meal roster for the entire FY23 school year.

The details: We were awarded **\$138,342.63** for FY23; Contract No. 1105706. The **\$35K** allotted for food in this budget only provides weekly meals to 133 of the 2,500 weekly students in our 2022-2023 Weekend Meal program. Hence, each week, less than 6% of students on our roster will be fed with this underbudgeted amount. The breakdown is: 133 students weekly x \$6.25 per weekend meal x the 42 weeks of the school year = **\$34,912.50**). Actually three of our 32 schools have over 150 students weekly receiving the meals. Undoubtedly, our budget is insufficient.

The breakdown of the requested **\$621,250** is: 2,500 students per week x \$6.25 per weekend meal x the 42 weeks the entire school year= \$656,250 minus the \$35,000 already awarded = **\$621,250**

We are extremely concerned because unless additional funds are allocated/committed by July 1, we will no longer be able to provide these critical weekend meals to our precious students in need, as we have successfully done in the past 21 years.

Additionally, as the government waivers for MCPS meals are ending June 17, many of our schools are reaching out to us, seeking our support to continue to provide weekend meals, not just in September, but this summer also! As always, we want to stick and stay, and remain in the fight to end child hunger, but we need the additional funds to do so. If not, we can't offer the weekend meal program this coming FY23 school year.

### ***Child Hunger – So Serious Yet So Solvable!***

We definitely have what it takes, not just to provide weekend meals but to continue incorporating the many plans we have developed, to strategically address the root and underlying dynamics of hunger; to help end child hunger at its core. With your increased funding, matched with our tenacity, and ingenuity – we will continue to play a significant part in ending child hunger, one day, one precious kid at a time!

Thank you for your consideration in increasing our base budget an additional \$621,250.