

Good afternoon, Council President Albornoz, Representative Nancy Navarro and members of the council.

Thank you for receiving and reading my request for more funding to be made available to support the culturally appropriate ethnic food program to residents in Montgomery County for more access and choice to ethnic foods across intercontinental lines and regions.

Thank you for giving residents the ability to gain access to foods that meets their culinary ethnic dietary need.

My name is Henrietta Jones, a resident from District 4 and A Place of Hope.

I have been distributing culturally appropriate food since the pandemic to two communities after residents gave feedback of their inability to prepare meals from foods they received and their challenges in purchasing food due the high cost of foods from their ethnic background.

Most of these foods received went to waste because to their culinary dietary consumption and inability to prepare them. Due to the economic decline and job loss during the pandemic, this barrier became a challenge, posing a threat for food insecurity and hunger for most families who depended on food distribution.

Many families with children including including seniors and the elderly who are one of the core targeted groups in Montgomery County for hunger relief and food security are not accustomed to and cannot prepare meals from items received thus resulting to waste.

One of the approaches that was implemented to address this need and eradicate food waste was the development of our food voucher program that provided several food choices across intercontinental regional lines that provided residents with the choice of foods they can choose from. This was done in collaboration with local stores in their communities.

This program has proven successful and is ongoing, and has helped bridge the gap, prevent barriers such as transportation, language, and the lack of immigration status that has made it difficult to earn a living and purchase food for residents in the black and brown minority communities.

The program has been very successful and welcoming with a growing increase of residents on waiting list pending more funding to meet the growing demand.

I am very grateful as a recipient of SNAP, rental and energy assistance, receiving my first deposit for a home after losing mine. I thank the County for such compassion and empathy toward my myself and family. I know too well the challenges of not having enough to purchase foods before and through college that were within my culinary ethnic diet which were and are very expensive.

Unfortunately, due the cost of these foods, immigration status as mentioned, and the inability to earn enough to support the increase demand for food budget in many minority families like mine, families are left with little or no choice to give their children the foods they know how to prepare and make several meals from.

I ask that more funding be made available to support this program to give residents more food choices across intercontinental lines and regions, remove barriers and decrease food waste.

Thanks for taking time to read my request. God bless.

Henrietta Jones  
Resident, Montgomery County