

House Agriculture, Livestock, & Water  
 04/18/2022 01:30 PM  
 HB22-1364 Food Pantry Assistance Grant Program  
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Mike Lutz For Broomfield FISH	<p>The Food Pantry Assistance grant has provided us the opportunity to transform our marketplace and make the shopping experience an enjoyable one for our families. We have expanded our produce selection and are providing different fruits and vegetables from across the world making our families feel a little more at home. Some of the items we have purchased have been persimmons, papayas, guava, jicama and other more common fruits and vegetables. We did not realize how popular the persimmons would be, but some of our families were very excited because they haven't had access to those items since moving into our community. We've enjoyed working with local companies and farmers, while providing wonderful Colorado grown food to our families. We have purchased local produce, eggs, and meat from Colorado-based companies and it is fantastic. One family told me that their family can't afford to go out and eat, but said the steaks she got from FISH (Colorado grass fed beef) were the best steaks they have ever had and that there is no way a restaurant could have provided a better meal. I called the farmer to tell the story and she was overwhelmed with joy. We have also been afforded the opportunity to provide local Halal meat to some refugee families relocated to Broomfield, You can imagine the impact of a family being able to access meat that is processed in a way so meaningful to their families. Thank you for your time and thank you for the FPAG. It truly has made an impact to our organization and the families we serve.</p>
Justina Potter For Potter Farms	<p>We are Potter Farms, local family farm in Colorado that raises livestock. We are not a non-profit. The Farm to Food Pantry Program with the help from Lift Up is essential in keeping us and others continue. With consistent funds and orders from the pantry programs, we have: helped put food on neighbors and community tables, kept the food local, we didn't have to sell out our animals at auctions. We also are able to help neighboring small family farms have an outlet for their animals. A local, family locker (USDA meat butcher) has also been able to stay in business and keep its employees because we are able to bring them business. The funds from programs like this are urgent in order for family farms to continue while at the same time provide good, local food for people who need it. With drastically increasing costs to producers and people not being able to afford food , we need to continue The Food Pantry Assistance Grant. It would be our hope that such a program be continued for several years.</p>
Ken Knoblock For Lifespan Local on behalf of Southwest Food Coalition	<p>To Whom it May Concern,</p>

	<p>I represent the Southwest Food Coalition, a group of residents, food organizations, and community leaders who work together to address food insecurity and improve food systems.</p> <p>We currently have funding from this program and our community is receiving a massive benefit. With this grant we are providing about 4,000 pounds of fresh, culturally appropriate food to 250 low income families per week in Southwest Denver. Half of the food we purchase is from Colorado sources. We deliver this food to 6 schools, 2 churches, and 1 pantry. Our families tell us every single week how grateful they are to receive fresh milk, eggs, meat, fruit and vegetables that they were never able to receive before.</p> <p>Our communities are suffering from hunger more than ever and this program provides a source of fresh healthy foods that contributes significantly to the wellbeing of our neighbors.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration and support.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Ken Knoblock</p>
<p>Stacy Petrie For Beet Street Farm</p>	<p>To begin, thank you for your service to our state and our community, as well as, your consideration of the Food Pantry Assistance Grant program.</p> <p>For the last year, our farm has had the opportunity to sell the products grown on our small acreage to The Good Food Collective who, in turn, distributes that food out to our region's food pantries and emergency food pantry providers. We feel incredibly fortunate to have this relationship that benefits not only our farm but gets fresh, high-quality produce to the vulnerable, low income populations in our community. We have always donated some of our excess produce to the local soup kitchen, but having added on an actual account feels like we are tipping the scales -- at least a bit -- towards a more equitable food system.</p> <p>I encourage you to support the Food Pantry Assistance Grant and the opportunities it provides to the economic well-being of our farmers and ranchers, as well as, to community members struggling to feed our family.</p> <p>Sincerely, Stacey Petrie Beet Street Farm</p>
<p>Amy Reid For Jake's Farm</p>	<p>Good morning and thank you for your service.</p> <p>I would like to introduce myself. My name is Amy Reid and I own Jakes Farm located in Hesperus Colorado. When I started my farm in 2015 it was with the goal of providing healthy farm raised food to our</p>

	<p>community. My focus is to get food to those in need. Good healthy food should be accessible to everyone.</p> <p>We currently work with multiple food pantries in our area, The Good Food Collective, Manna, and La Plata Family Centers Coalition. The Food Pantry Assistance Grant Bill is an essential part of this relationship. The funding allows the local food pantries to purchase local, healthy food from us. We are currently providing two hundred dozen eggs per month to families in need. And that’s just eggs, we also provide jams, freeze dried fruits and veggies, and sausage. This is a significant impact on our community.</p> <p>With the rising prices, families will need help more than ever. Food security is critical, and this funding is needed to keep our local residents fed.</p> <p>Another benefit to food pantries sourcing locally is the funds support small farmers. Which in turn allow us to create local jobs.</p> <p>Please pass the Food Pantry Assistance Grant Bill and help keep those in need in our community fed.</p> <p>Sincerely, Amy Reid Jakes Farm</p>
<p>Christina Knickerbocker For La Plata Family Centers Coalition</p>	<p>Thank you for your time today.</p> <p>My name is Christina Knickerbocker. I run the food pantry at the La Plata Family Center. We provide food for walk-ins, low income residents, undocumented families, local school programs, remote areas, at-risk neighborhoods, and working families living out of their cars. Basically anyone who asks for food. The number of people in need has increased throughout Covid, and continues to rise with current economic pressures.</p> <p>We are part of the Care and Share network, and we work hard to grow some food. But it is not enough. We have relied heavily on FPAG funding to both feed our neighbors and support local food producers. We see more hungry families coming to access our pantry. Please enable us to help them by funding the FPAG. Thank you!</p>
<p>RitaMary Hennigan For Self</p>	<p>My name is Rita Mary Hennigan, and I am writing to express my support for the Food Pantry Assistance Grant (FPAG) Program.</p> <p>I formerly worked for Eagle Valley Community Foundation (EVCF) and its hunger-relief program The Community Market (TCM) in Eagle County. EVCF/TCM were awarded multiple grants from the FPAG Program, and I witnessed firsthand the positive impact this funding had. FPAG increased the amount of fresh, locally-produced, nutrient-</p>

	<p>dense food TCM was able to purchase and offer to individuals and families who visited TCM.</p> <p>The high quality of food purchased with FPAG funding contributed to a dignified experience for visitors to TCM. Additionally, the organization developed relationships with regional farmers that persist to this day. TCM received technical assistance from Ciara Low (then co-director of non-profit organization UpRoot Colorado) that was integral to TCM's ability to successfully foster these partnerships. I am in support of a portion of the funding being allocated to technical assistance annually. Additionally, the flexibility created by allowing food pantries to pre-purchase Colorado agricultural products has the potential to benefit food pantries and Colorado farmers alike.</p>
<p>Susan Halkin For TARA Food Pantry</p>	<p>We are the TARA Food Pantry located in Arboles, Colorado in Archuleta County. We are housed in the basement of the TARA Community Center. The pantry opened in January of 2020. We had been able to secure funds from many grants that were offered due to Co-Vid. We are also supported by the Archuleta County Food Coalition, Care and Share, generous donors and our amazing volunteers. At this time we are running out of funding when the need is so great due to inflation which is hitting our families hard. The cost of food and gasoline has caused for our numbers to increase greatly in the last two months. We find securing food more difficult for the food insecure in our community.</p> <p>We are in a "Food Desert", as the closest grocery store is 20 minutes away (and very high priced) in Ignacio or 40 minutes away in Pagosa Springs. Our families must travel long distances for their food needs. Since we have opened the pantry many families have remarked how the opening of the pantry has changed their lives and they are so thankful for it. We have been able to offer many fresh produce choices and locally grown eggs and meats to our families. We have recently notified our local farmers that we are unable to purchase their products until we secure more funding.</p> <p>One of the more astounding stories that we share is of a single male senior in our community. He remarked "Since the opening of the pantry I don't have to chew on ice anymore to trick myself into thinking that I am eating. The food choices that are offered are able to feed me now. I am thankful for the food pantry." As you can see we are making a difference in our community and hope that we can continue to offer nutritious food choices to our families in the future. With your help we can continue our service to our community. Thank you for your past and future support of food pantries across Colorado.</p> <p>Susan Halkin TARA Food Pantry Arboles, Colorado</p>





Working in deep partnership to build a just and resilient regional food system in SW Colorado  
To the State Agriculture, Livestock, and Water Committee:

Thank you so much for your service to our agricultural sector and the state as a whole. I am writing today to urge your support for the Food Pantry Assistance Grant. As the SW Colorado Regional Food Pantry Assistance Grant Coordinator for Hunger Free Colorado and Director of The Good Food Collective, I have seen the powerful impacts that the Food Pantry Assistance grant has made on our regional farming and ranching community, as well as, for residents experiencing food insecurity. I first stepped into this role four years ago when the first round of Food Assistance Grant funds were made available. The response of our region's pantries was telling -- they were ecstatic. The grand majority had never before had ANY funds to use to be able to purchase food for their clients. Instead, they relied on donations of shelf stable food provided by Food Banks and community members, as well as, the contributions of expired food coming from grocery and other retail food outlets. While this provided our region's food insecure with calories, these foods did not support the health and well-being of these residents nor their dignity. My office resides in our local soup kitchen and the mountains of donuts, processed snacks, canned ravioli, and ramen FAR exceed the number of zucchini, wholegrains, or proteins. The downstream impact of this is that our region's most vulnerable, lowest income residents not only struggle with food insecurity, but ultimately with chronic health challenges, which compromise their opportunities for productive lives and personal well-being while concurrently putting a larger burden on our health and social service sector. This is not what our residents want nor how we want to support our residents -- a 2020 poll of regional food pantry clients showed an overwhelming and universal request for fruits, vegetables, and proteins, which correlated with what we heard from food assistance providers.

Within my role at Hunger Free Colorado and more generally at the Good Food Collective, I have the opportunity to work closely with Southwest Colorado's Farmers and Ranchers. As you all know, these are some of the hardest working folks and their efforts contribute to the health of our water and soils, the vibrancy of our communities and culture, and the stability of our rural economies. We are proud that our region houses over 2900 farms (2017 USDA Ag Census), however, the reality of our producers is a mirror of rural living everywhere -- the average individual working in the agricultural sector in La Plata County made \$32K in 2020 (2020 Region 9 Economic Snapshot), though our baseline 'living wage' is \$35K if you have no children and \$67K if you have just one child (MIT 2020). The reality is that the majority of our farmers live in poverty. In 2019, I was out on a farm helping with a glean after an early frost had taken out a farmers' onion crops in the Hermosa Valley. After five years of production, this young farmer confessed to me that he was having to leave the field stating, "you know there is something deeply wrong in your society when a farmer is the first in soup line".

Over its four year tenure, the Food Pantry Assistance Grant has ushered in meaningful pathways to shift both of these narratives and produce positive, measureable, and systems-level changes within our region. It introduced a new model of addressing the nutritional and food needs of our most vulnerable residents, while providing our regional producers with reliable wholesale accounts that they could count on. Since its inception over \$650K in funding has been secured by our region and used to purchase locally produced meat, dairy, poultry products, grains, legumes, and produce. I have had food pantries call me describing how clients left in tears because they received produce that did not have mold on it,



Working in deep partnership to build a just and resilient regional food system in SW Colorado but that was whole and clean. "They felt seen. They felt like there were part of, not apart from, the community". On the flip side, I have had farmers tell me how the "Food Pantry Assistance Grant saved their farm by providing consistent accounts" and that sales increased by over 30%. 90% of the farms we work with directly shared that this funding has made their farms "more economically viable". Last year, 3 of the farms that we work with added full-time permanent jobs as a result of the confidence they had in this market.

In passing HB 22-1364, you have the opportunity to continue the positive impacts this program is making in our rural communities, at a time when food insecurity is once again skyrocketing due to inflation and the decrease in COVID-related benefits. This last week, I had 2 pantries and one senior center contact me to seek help. They reported they had run out of funds to purchase food, their Food Bank orders hadn't arrived due to supply chain challenges and their numbers had once again skyrocketed. I urge you to support our state's farmers and ranchers, as well as, our most vulnerable residents by passing the Food Pantry Assistance Grant.

Thank you for your consideration and support,

Rachel Landis  
Director, Good Food Collective  
SW Colorado Regional Food Pantry Assistance Grant Coordinator, Hunger Free Colorado



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