

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 19, 2007

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building

Dear Chairman Peterson:

As you consider reauthorization of the Farm Bill, we urge you to include provisions that will improve nutrition and public health by increasing access to healthy foods in low-income and underserved communities.

As you well know, America is facing a severe health crisis due to alarming increases in rates of obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related diseases. The Institute of Medicine estimates that national health care expenditures related to obesity range from \$98 to \$117 billion annually. On the other hand, an increasing number of families are facing hunger and food insecurity: according to USDA's most recent data, more than 35 million Americans are unable to purchase food on a regular basis. Both sets of problems stem in part from the same cause: in urban as well as rural areas, too many low-income families live in "food deserts" where access to fresh, healthy foods is lacking.

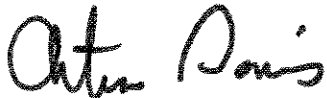
In the interests of public health, cost-efficiency, and social justice, we should consider policies to increase the availability of and access to fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods and communities. In particular, we encourage you to include in the 2007 Farm Bill an expansion of the Community Food Project competitive grants program to at least \$30 million mandatory annual funding. This important program, which has the support of the Bush Administration as well as national anti-hunger groups such as World Hunger Year and the Community Food Security Coalition, helps communities build sustainable supply systems of healthy, local foods that will reach all segments of the population, including those who now are too far from grocery stores, co-ops, farmers' markets, farmstands, and other food networks. Oftentimes, communities already have the will, the individuals, and the resources to make positive change; it is just a matter of linking it all together. The Community Food Project grants help accomplish this linkage.

With a one-time infusion of federal funds, non-profit organizations around the country have been able to build innovative partnerships and develop a wide range of projects, including providing marginalized farmers with small business and enterprise mentoring;

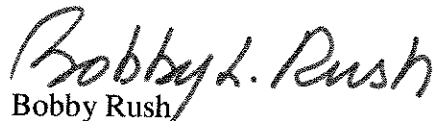
helping cities attract grocery stores to underserved areas; and fostering farming and healthy food entrepreneurship among school-age youth. Unfortunately, this highly successful and cost-effective program has been level-funded at \$5 million. A funding level of \$30 million will allow more urban and rural communities around the country get the start-up help they need to build local food systems and increase their capacity to provide for their own food needs.

Thank you for the consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you to advance nutrition and farm policies that will improve the health and well-being of all our of nation's people.

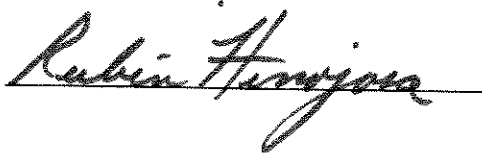
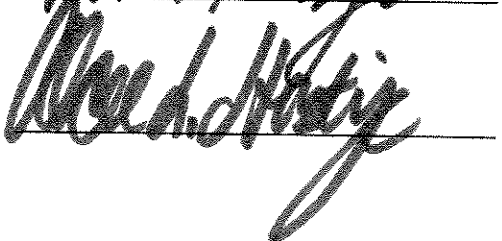
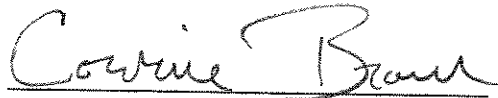
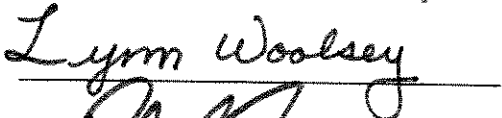
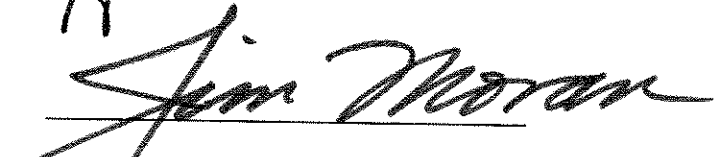
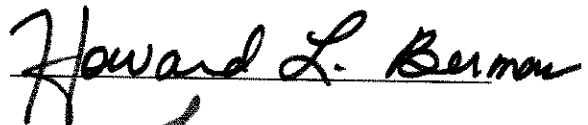
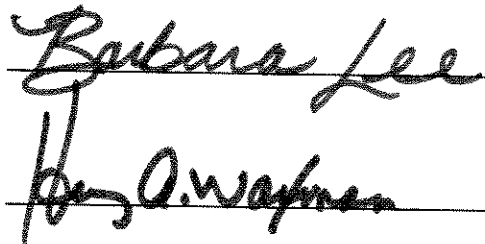
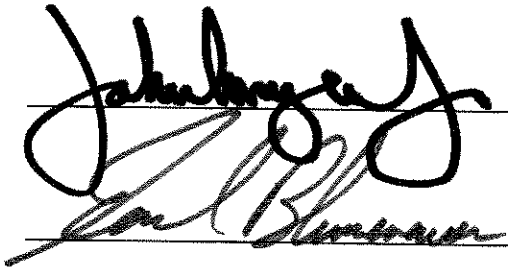
Sincerely,



Artur Davis
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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