



April 1, 2021

Dear Board Chair Vasquez,

We appreciate your support of our community and our Food Bank during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the recent legislation that has triggered funding opportunities, the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano respectfully requests that Solano County allocates 2% of its recently received American Recovery Act funds toward the provision of emergency food for economic victims of COVID. We are in contact with every city in our county receiving Recovery Act Funds, and have submitted a separate request to the cities in Contra Costa and Solano Counties. With the requested funding, the Food Bank will be able to continue to respond to food insecurity regionally, supplying food purchased with these funds to the established network of emergency food providers across our cities and counties.

The demand for assistance during COVID has been greater than during the great recession of 2008 or nearly any other time in our country's history. The COVID-related need for food assistance persists. The most recent base unemployment in Solano County is 8.1%, compared to pre-COVID rates of 3.9%. The estimated adjusted unemployment rate, as suggested by CDSS, is approximately 12.3%, which adjusts for those who are no longer reflected on the official roles. With an increased rate of unemployment, more families in our community are making the difficult decision of whether or not they can afford enough food for their household; we are serving an additional 100,000 people each month than we were this time last year.

Our Food Bank has also experienced over a 35% decrease in food drive donations due to COVID restrictions. This included losing our largest food drive of the year with the cancellation of the mail carrier drive, as well as the traditional Boy Scout event. Grocery recovery (store pick-up) has also had significant ebb and flows in availability that has impacted multiple food categories. The pandemic also significantly impacted commodity prices in areas such as dairy, meat and canned proteins thus obtaining less food per purchasing dollar. The funding request from the County is needed to address immediate and medium-term food inventory requirements to meet community needs.

We share excitement regarding the increased availability of COVID vaccines and the return to some economic reopening. Our excitement, however, is tempered by the recognition that there will be a long and slow economic recovery from COVID for many families. During COVID, utility companies committed to not disconnect utilities for non-payment, but those bills are not forgiven. Californians, for example, owe California's four investor-owned utilities \$1.25 billion dollars. Similarly, California renters were protected from eviction related to non-payment of rent during the pandemic. In addition to the \$1.25 billion owed to California's utility companies, it is reasonable to assume that Californians also owe many billions of dollars more in unpaid rent, mortgage, credit card, car payment, health care, and other accumulated debt. It will take families years to dig themselves out of the financial hole caused by COVID. The industries most impacted were the retail/food service/manufacturing industries whose workers were often working in jobs that did not pay a living wage pre-COVID, and who will be most challenged to repay accumulated debt. Many of these families will require support during the financial recovery from the pandemic.

The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano greatly appreciates your consideration of our funding request. Thank you for your partnership as we join together to stabilize vulnerable families across our community. I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss the details of this request and the opportunity it would afford our Food Bank to better serve the significant need in our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "JS", written in a cursive style.

Joel Sjoström
President/CEO

cc: Kim Castaneda, VP of Development and Communications
cc: Cassidie Bates, Policy and Advocacy Manager