

January 6, 2024

Dear Albany County ARPA Review Committee,

This is a letter of support for the ARPA Grant Application being submitted by FOCUS Churches of Albany. In addition to offering the FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry and FOCUS Breakfast Club (soup kitchen), they have recently created the FOCUS Food Network. ARPA funds would allow FOCUS to deepen and expand their network to provide more locally grown/sourced food for food insecure Albany County residents.

During the summer, FOCUS Churches of Albany received the Nourish New York (NNY) grant through the NYS Department of Agriculture. In a spirit of collaboration, FOCUS has chosen to share this five-year NNY grant with ten food pantries in Albany County, in both urban and rural settings. FOCUS has been fighting food insecurity by purchasing shipments of fresh vegetables and fruit grown in NY, along with NY raised meats and NY produced dairy. This is a unique Albany County-based effort, benefitting city neighborhoods, rural areas and public schools.

Thanks to the FOCUS Food Network, our county experiences a win-win: local farmers benefit from these NNY purchases and our neighbors receive fresh and nutritious food.

The elimination of emergency federal SNAP benefits in March 2023 has impacted many of the people we serve. By awarding the FOCUS Food Network this grant, we will be able to meet the needs of our food insecure Albany County neighbors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Fein', written in a cursive style.

Sam Fein
Albany County Legislator
6th District