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It is my pleasure to express our strong and unqualified support for RWJBarnabas Health and the renewal of State-appropriated funds to RWJBH in the FY 2027 New Jersey State Budget. On behalf of The Franklin Food Bank, a leading community-based organization dedicated to providing nutritious, high-quality food access and advocacy for over 50 years, we can attest that the support from RWJBH through these State-appropriated funds allows our organization to invest directly in community-based initiatives and partnerships that fundamentally advance health and stability across our shared communities.

Our mission is deeply aligned with RWJBH's commitment to addressing the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) through actionable, preventative care. The Franklin Food Bank recognizes RWJBH as a crucial strategic partner, uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between food access and clinical health. This is not simply a transactional relationship; it is a collaborative effort to ensure that food security programs are integrated with preventative health services, maximizing their collective impact on health outcomes in Central New Jersey.

The impact of this partnership is both broad and profound. RWJBH's support has been instrumental in delivering our programs, broadening our reach, and deepening our impact across our service area. Through this partnership, we have been able to:

- **Integrate Preventative Health:** Strategically deliver **on-site health screenings** (e.g., blood pressure, glucose testing) and wellness resources alongside food distribution, effectively turning our pantry into a point of preventative care for the **7,600 families we serve monthly**.
- **Secure Critical Operations:** RWJBH has provided essential assistance in gaining access to critically important funding streams, enhancing our operational resilience, and enabling us to distribute **over 3.5 million pounds of food annually** to our neighbors.
- **Enable Strategic Expansion:** Without the programmatic and strategic backing of RWJBH, The Franklin Food Bank would not have been able to successfully expand our programming and support infrastructure throughout Central New Jersey, ensuring more households have access to dignified support.

The continuation of State investment in RWJBH's community partnerships is absolutely critical to sustaining the core programs that directly benefit vulnerable populations in Franklin Township and beyond. If these State appropriations are not renewed, the system's ability to support community partners like ours would be severely diminished. This would result in the loss of essential preventative care screenings, a decrease in our operational funding, and the immediate curtailment of our regional expansion goals, directly limiting the number of clients reached and programs delivered to communities most in need.

We express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for our strategic partnership with RWJBarnabas Health and their deep, long-term commitment to building and sustaining healthier communities throughout New Jersey.

Sincerely,

Derek Smith
Executive Director