



THE LONG BRANCH CHURCH OF GOD

Bishop William Edwards, LEAD PASTOR

It is my pleasure to express our strong support for RWJBarnabas Health and the renewal of State-appropriated funds in the FY 2027 New Jersey State Budget on behalf of The Long Branch Church of God (LBCOG). We firmly believe that continuing this state investment is essential to strengthening community health, expanding access to resources, and sustaining meaningful partnerships that uplift underserved families across New Jersey.

The Long Branch Church of God is a faith-based, community-centered organization committed to serving families through spiritual guidance, social support, and holistic community outreach. For decades, our ministry has stood as a trusted anchor in Long Branch, dedicated to empowering individuals, supporting vulnerable households, and building programs that enhance physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

The support from RWJBH through the State-appropriated funds allows our organization to use resources to invest directly in community-based initiatives and partnerships that nurtures and provides critical support across our shared communities. These resources equip us to meet people where they are, strengthen our outreach capacity, and ensure that every family—regardless of circumstances—has access to life-changing resources.

RWJBarnabas Health's partnership has significantly strengthened our ability to address one of the most pressing needs in our community: **access to nutritious food, education on healthy eating, and support for long-term nourishment.** Through RWJBH's commitment to wellness and prevention, we have been able to create programs that not only feed families but empower them to make healthier choices for their future.

RWJBH's support has also allowed The Long Branch Church of God to expand vital nourishment-focused initiatives, including:



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- Fresh food distribution events providing fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and heart-healthy items to families in need.
- Healthy pantry expansions, supplying nutrient-rich food options instead of the typical high-sodium, low-nutrient items often found in food relief programs.
- Seasonal produce giveaways, ensuring families—especially children and seniors—have ongoing access to fresh, wholesome food.

This partnership helped us serve more than 100 families with fresh and nutritious groceries during the last program cycle.

RWJBH's involvement is especially powerful because it bridges the gap between clinical health care and everyday lifestyle support. Families in our community face high rates of:

- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Food insecurity

By focusing on nourishment, healthy eating, and wellness education, RWJBH provides tools that directly reduce these risks and improve long-term health outcomes.

These nutrition-centered initiatives have made significant impact in neighborhoods such as:

- Long Branch's West End
- North Long Branch
- Liberty Street and Ocean Avenue corridor

Many families in these neighborhoods struggle with limited access to fresh food, transportation barriers, and limited awareness of health risks tied to diet. RWJBH's programs have helped close these gaps in tangible ways.

RWJBH's partnership has helped us:

- Teach parents how to build healthier households
- Equip children with knowledge about nutrition and wellness early in life
- Provide seniors with resources to support longevity and dietary health
- Strengthen the physical and emotional resilience of families navigating hardship

These outcomes have ripple effects across the entire community.

If State-appropriated funding to RWJBH is not renewed, the most immediate loss would be:

- A reduction in fresh food distributions that currently feed hundreds of families
- Fewer nutrition workshops and cooking demonstrations
- Decreased outreach to underserved neighborhoods
- Less preventive education, leading to higher rates of diet-related illness

For many households, these programs represent their only consistent access to healthy food and wellness guidance.

We express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for our partnership with RWJBarnabas Health and their unwavering commitment to building and sustaining healthier communities. Continued State investment in RWJBH's community partnerships is essential to sustaining programs that directly benefit families across New Jersey—especially those who depend on these critical nutrition and wellness resources. We are proud to stand with RWJBH and wholeheartedly support the renewal of State-appropriated funds for FY 2027.

Thank you,

Kasey Edwards

Kasey Edwards,
Executive Pastor / Outreach Director

Bishop William Edwards,
Lead Pastor