



TONI'S KITCHEN

A ministry of St. Luke's Church

It is my pleasure to strongly support renewal of State-appropriated funds to RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) for FY 2027 in the New Jersey State Budget. Toni's Kitchen, a food ministry of St. Luke's Church in Montclair, has over 40 years experience in building reliable access to healthy food for the widely diverse food insecure populations in Essex County. With over 2500 actively engaged volunteers and 95 partner relationships, Toni's Kitchen provides not only 2 million+ meals annually, but also provides a robust offering of wraparound services. These State funds are an important investment in our community by supporting the work of RWJBH with community-based resources such as Toni's Kitchen.

Toni's Kitchen's mission is closely aligned with that of RWJBH as we seek to address the social determinants of health, especially within food insecure populations. We have used RWJBH as a trusted advisor on new program development and as a resource to connect with other valuable services. Over 4000 households use Toni's Kitchen's services to ensure their nutritional needs are met and to help stabilize and strengthen themselves and their families. The tangible impacts of addressing food insecurity ripple throughout the larger community - significantly improving educational outcomes, meaningfully integrating older adults in social programs while improving their ability to hold on to housing and, importantly, engaging food secure residents in caring for the needs of their more vulnerable neighbors.

We have worked closely with RWJBH for several years and this partnership has helped us design and launch new initiatives to address nutritional health and build stability within food insecure populations. Their deep expertise and ability to connect and mobilize resources has had a material impact on our program reach and effectiveness. The continuation of State-appropriated funds to RWJBH is critical to moving our most vulnerable populations into improved health and stability. Without these funds, the community-based organizations RWJBH works with would be significantly diminished, both in reach and in impact.

We deeply appreciate the support from the State of New Jersey for RWJBH's work. Their work makes us all healthier and our communities stronger.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Mernin', with a long, sweeping underline.

Anne Mernin

Executive Director

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