

Theresa Utton-Jerman

Subject: FW: Two ideas for "shovel ready" projects re Working families and Small Business Covid Relief

Mary,

Thank you for reaching out for proposals for directing one time COVID \$. Please see two suggestions from Human Services for the Working families and Small business COVID Relief bill. Marybeth Redmond and Taylor Small took the lead on this for the committee. (Economic Services and Equity issues are their 'assignments' relative to the 2022 budget and they already had connected with Kimberly on budget issues). These proposals have been shared with the HS committee.

Both of these two proposals are "ready to go"; are related to the extraordinary needs that the COVID-19 pandemic has created; will support working families and getting adults ready /able to work, and will put \$ into the local/state economy.

1 \$700K total. \$350K each to the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV) and VT Refugee Resettlement Program (USCRI) These COVID \$ would enable these two organization to continue the addition/different services and supports they have had to to refugee and immigrant families

These organizations received a similar grant last session in order to assist immigrant and refugee families in their unique needs that surfaced. The needs for employment readiness and support continue because of the continuation of the public health emergency. Listed below are what they did with the first grant.

- **Interpretation and translation services** related to the public health crisis; including but not limited to **accessing Covid testing and vaccines** -- beyond what the Department of Health is able to offer
- **Purchase of more than 100 laptops and digital literacy training for households** to ensure that children can attend school remotely, **access telehealth services, and adults can find employment opportunities**
- **Case management services related to an increased need in housing assistance**
- **Workforce development and employment coaching**
- **Navigation of Reach Up, 3Squares, and other public benefits following job losses**

Both organizations have collaborated beautifully together to eliminate the duplication of services and have maintained a shared database tracker to coordinate activities and support these .

2. \$1.3M to the Reach Up program that would be distributed directly to families, similar to the one-time checks that have been issued previously with CRF funds (in the total amount of \$1.3 million). This allocation would further support some of our most vulnerable families to meet the employment goals of the program. Many of these families are unbanked and have no credit card...so this \$ would be spent in the local economy

As evidenced by the most recent Reach Up evaluation, the increased financial supports during the pandemic have assisted participants in moving into employment with wages at higher rates than ever before. This proposal mirrors what DCF provided Last session, with COVID dollars Reach Up families

On behalf of the Human Services Committee we appreciate the Appropriations Committee consideration of these two proposals in the bill under discussion .

Best,

Ann

Representative Ann Pugh

Chair, House Human Services Committee

South Burlington 7-2