



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 7, 2021

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

Our new community budget funding request (CBFR) program is an open and transparent process poised to fund key local priorities in fast growing Central Florida and across the nation.

New rules are paving the way for an ethical and transparent process worthy of the Congress and our constituents. Hosting website notices and applications, requiring members to sponsor these requests, making the requests public, banning requests for for-profit businesses, and allowing the public enough time to scrutinize requests, are key reforms instilling integrity, progress and trust into the budget process.

The day that the Appropriations Committee announced CBFR's, we immediately put out notices on our official website, social media and e-newsletter. We hosted a town hall with local officials and administrators. We provided application tips and deadlines, answered questions and took down suggestions. We gave applicants several weeks to apply, but also enough time for our meaningful review of these projects. We ended up mostly selecting local government proposals since they were well-vetted, demonstrated strong support from the community and had the sophistication and wherewithal to spend said federal funding and complete projects in a timely manner. We also sent out a public notice of all the selected projects, which was well-received by the local press.

Central Florida grew approximately 20% from 2010 to 2020 according to the US Census. Our community has a great need for higher paying jobs, affordable housing and transportation projects. For years, these decisions were made by DC bureaucrats far removed from our community, and rarely accessible to elected members of congress. They never knew our communities like members do. As a result, this grant process was a far cry from the vision of our Founding Fathers, when they drafted Article I of the US Constitution. These new jobs, affordable housing and transportation projects have been desperately needed for years, were selected by a local member with close insight, and now finally have a chance to be funded.

In addition, TIGER Grants, Community Development Block Grants, and other federally funded initiatives have been spent for years locally without any reference to their federal source. This left a disjoint among my constituents between the roughly 1/3 of their pay they send to Washington as income taxes, and the funding that actually returned to our community. In short, constituents paid their taxes but were kept in that dark on how these funds were spent locally. These new CBFR's have been highlighted in the press, and are now well-known to our local communities.

Constituents are once again starting to see the direct value between the taxes they pay and the local projects being federally-funded. It is critical to a healthy Republic to keep our constituents well-informed on federal spending locally, and ensure they see the value of their taxes and real progress made in our communities.

Sincerely,



Darren Soto  
Member of Congress