



House Agriculture Committee
Hearing: *Review of USDA Nutrition Distribution Programs*
Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Statement of Carlos Rodriguez
President & CEO
Community FoodBank of New Jersey
31 Evans Terminal
Hillside, NJ 07205

Dear Chairwoman Hayes and Ranking Member Bacon,

Who We Are

Thank you for the invitation to testify at today's hearing, a *Review of USDA Nutrition Distribution Programs*. My name is Carlos Rodriguez and I am President and CEO of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my perspective on the levels of food insecurity in my community and how nutrition distribution programs assist in ensuring we have enough nutritious food to serve any one who walks through the doors of the food bank and our partner agencies.

The Community FoodBank of New Jersey is a member of Feeding America, the largest hunger-relief network in the country. Through a network of more than 200 food banks, 21 statewide food bank associations, and over 60,000 partner agencies, food pantries and meal programs, our food bank and the Feeding America network helped provide 6.6 billion meals to tens of millions of people in need last year. Like our sister food banks across the country, the Community FoodBank of New Jersey works to fight hunger by engaging, educating and empowering our community. We provide food for immediate need, connect families with critical financial resources, and address root causes of hunger, working across sectors to create food security for all. We work with a wide variety of retailers, farmers, manufacturers, distributors, and federal programs to secure donated and purchased essential groceries. We distribute this food through a large, decentralized grassroots network of more than 800 community-based feeding programs. In 2020, we distributed food to support more than 85 million meals through our network of partners in New Jersey, where 800,000 residents struggle with food insecurity, including 200,000 children.



Our work depends on broad community support. Feeding America food banks are supported by millions of volunteers, who help us pack food boxes, organize and manage food distributions,

and address other client needs. In addition to managing a food supply chain that moves 7.5 billion pounds of food in 2020, the national network of food banks also provides a variety of

additional programs and services, ranging from food pharmacies and nutrition education to job training and assistance with applying for benefit programs. Collectively, we serve children, families and seniors in every county in the United States, including each of the 21 counties in New Jersey.

The food banks in the Feeding America network are uniquely capable of working to reduce food insecurity. Through forty years of growing our capacity, building public-private partnerships, responding to crises and driving innovation, we've seen it all.

Demand We Are Seeing

Between disruptions to the supply chain, increased need for help, and adoption of new safety protocols that shifted our distribution models, the pandemic presented a perfect storm for the charitable food system. We are still feeling those effects today. The COVID-19 pandemic continues both to significantly impact people facing hunger, and to challenge food banks to meet higher demand for emergency food assistance. Feeding America food banks have reported a 40 percent average increase in demand for food assistance, and nearly 40 percent of people served at food banks since the beginning of the pandemic are new to the charitable food system. Our experience in New Jersey matches these national trends.

There were tens of millions of people in America facing hunger before the pandemic and that is still true today. In 2020, 38 million people (1 in 8 individuals), including 12 million children (1 in 6 children) were food insecure, up from 35 million in 2019. In addition, households with children were 1.7 times more likely to face hunger compared to households with no children. Households headed by single women are 2.6 times more likely than average to face hunger. Bipartisan federal intervention and an unprecedented response from the charitable food system helped prevent food insecurity from increasing even higher in 2020. According to data compiled by the Urban Institute, 60 million people accessed charitable food assistance in 2020, an increase of 50% over the prior year (Source, Charitable Food assistance report from FA: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/charitable-food-access>).

COVID-19 Recovery Legislation and investments in nutrition programs in the American Rescue Plan Act have helped support families and reduce some of the demand our food bank is seeing, but demand is continuing to exceed pre-pandemic levels. With the sustained demand for food

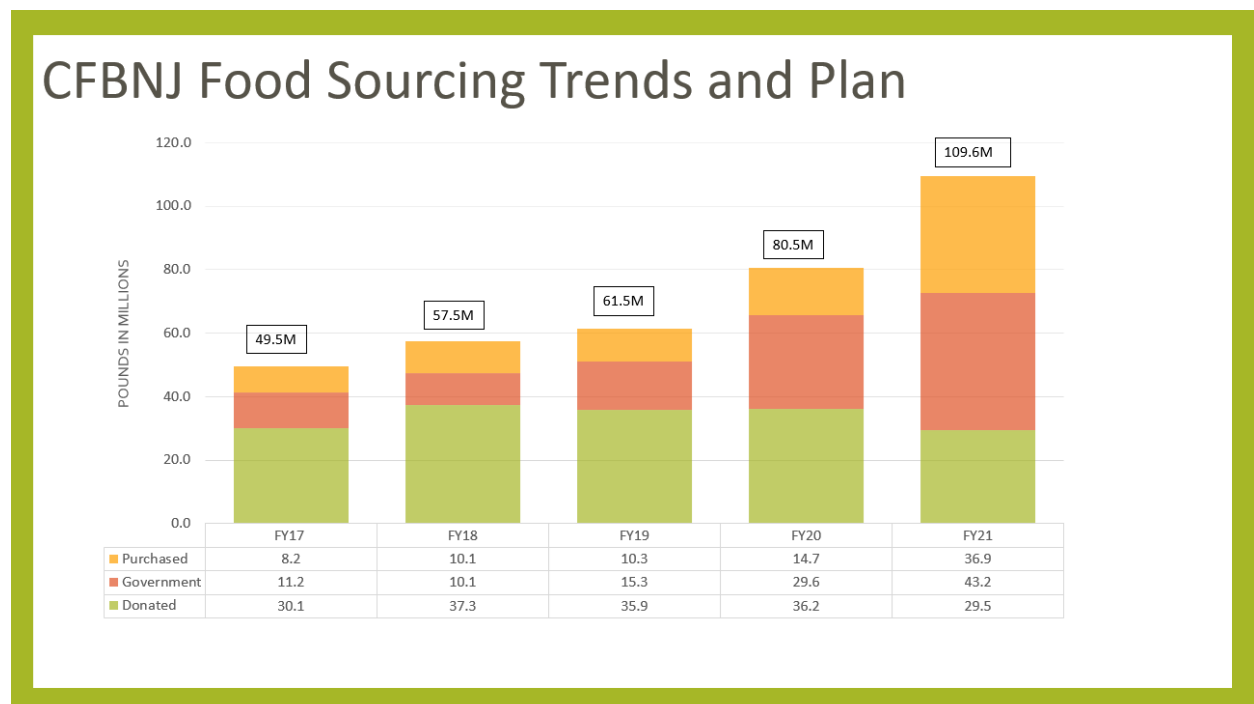


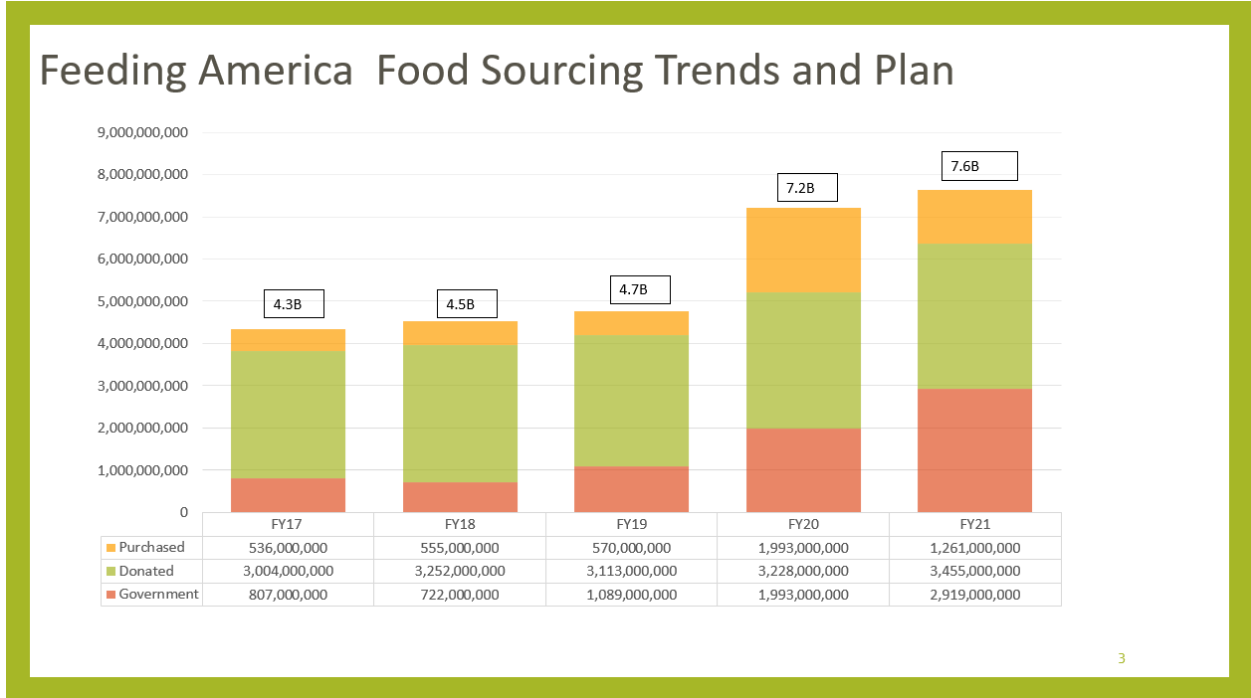
assistance, people facing hunger and food banks across the nation will need additional investments in nutrition programs to put food on the table.

Our work to provide enough nutritious foods for households in New Jersey is complicated by current supply chain disruptions and temporary increases in food prices. These challenges are felt across the food bank network. Feeding America reports that the cost to transport donated food to food banks has increased 20% since last year. Our own transport costs jumped 34% in a single year due to COVID.

In addition, COVID has dramatically altered the mix of food sources that food banks are accessing in order to keep up with pandemic needs. A drop in donations has necessitated dramatic increases in food purchases - up 58% nationally for FY21 from the previous fiscal year (1,096M meals vs. 692M). The Community FoodBank of New Jersey's food purchases more than tripled in a single year.

At the same time, food from USDA commodities are also lower this year. USDA foods, some of the most nutritious foods our network distributes, are the backbone of our network's food supply. **This vital food source is expected to decline by up to 30% .**





The most significant source of USDA foods is The Emergency Food Assistance Program, or TEFAP, which helps smooth out the volatility that pandemic-related supply chain challenges have caused by providing a stable source of nutritious food for our network.

What is The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

Since its inception in the early 1980s as a program to connect surplus commodity products with emergency feeding organizations, TEFAP has served a dual purpose of providing nutritious food to the nation’s charitable community while supporting US grown commodities. As the program proved its efficacy and efficiency, it expanded to become an essential part of how food banks and other local organizations provide food to people in need. Today, TEFAP offers more than 120 foods, including fruits and vegetables, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, nuts, milk and cheese, and whole-grain and enriched grain products, including rice, cereal, and pasta. It is the backbone of the charitable food system with an impact that is felt in every state across the country.

The Feeding America network is the largest TEFAP participant, with 193 of our 200 food banks receiving and distributing TEFAP foods. Feeding America food banks receive TEFAP foods



through their respective states and then distribute the food directly to local organizations, including food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters.

States and the Feeding America food bank network place food orders with USDA, which then works with the food industry to fulfill the orders. Each state is required to determine how TEFAP foods are distributed, and they oversee the agencies that distribute the food. The federal statute requires states collect streamlined information on who is in need of emergency food assistance, specifically name, address, number in household, and income. States have significant flexibility to structure TEFAP operations to meet the needs of local communities, something the state of New Jersey was a critical partner on throughout the pandemic.

TEFAP Bonus commodity purchases are driven by the need for commodity support as prices for commodity foods fluctuate. When the price of an agricultural commodity falls so low that the market for it is in danger, the Department of Agriculture spends money to purchase enough of that commodity to stabilize the market. These purchased foods are then distributed through the TEFAP program to those who need a helping hand. This is a highly-efficient public private partnership, supporting agricultural markets, while allowing for the purchase of nutritious food when it is at a very low price point.

The Farm Bill also authorizes funds to support the storage and distribution of TEFAP commodities, although this is not mandatory funding and depends on an annual appropriation. These are dollars spent to help defray the cost of storing commodities and then moving them to the distribution point so they can be accessed by our clients. Unfortunately, the funds Congress has historically appropriated for the purposes of TEFAP storage and distribution are significantly less than the costs incurred by our food bank members. Food banks make up the shortfall for the storage and distribution costs to ensure equitable and efficient distribution of TEFAP foods into the community. If Congress were to appropriate the full authorized amount of storage and distribution funds, food charities would have additional resources to provide services in their communities.

How TEFAP Helps

The Emergency Food Assistance Program illustrates how a government program, nonprofits, and the private sector can work together to provide targeted, accessible, and cost efficient food assistance that is responsive to immediate need in local communities. TEFAP is a very responsive program, because it can be accessed by struggling families and individuals on an as needed basis. After a sudden emergency leaves a family without money, there is a place to turn. For many of the people we serve, the need for food assistance can be episodic and due to



unexpected expenses, such as a car breaking down or a sudden layoff. TEFAP helps fill the gaps when this happens.

In addition to the food provided to food banks and other nonprofits by USDA, support for food assistance through other nutrition programs plays a critical role in feeding families and individuals in our communities and across the country. Our food insecure neighbors rely heavily on an array of federal programs such as SNAP, school lunches, WIC, and senior meals to meet their families needs. Millions of Americans would not have the food they need to survive without the continued support of strong federal nutrition programs.

SNAP is the most important of these programs and stands as the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Feeding America food banks will distribute between 6 and 7 billion meals this year. SNAP provides nine times that amount of food. Continuing to invest in SNAP will reduce food insecurity, improve health outcomes, reduce burden on food banks, and continue to stimulate local economies.

What More is Needed

We applaud the actions taken by Congress and USDA, which have been critical to support communities and families since the start of the pandemic. These actions have led to innovative school meal delivery programs like Pandemic EBT, SNAP emergency allotments for the duration of the public health emergency, an additional \$1.2 billion in short term TEFAP funding in 2020, and an estimated \$2 billion in USDA funding for emergency food assistance in 2022. In 2020, USDA foods provided 2.4 billion out of the 6.1 billion meals that the Feeding America network distributed.

We anticipate total food delivered from USDA to have dropped 30% in 2021 compared to 2020 due to the end of USDA's trade mitigation food purchases and other temporary programs. Although actions taken by USDA to support the emergency food network will help provide \$2 billion in support in Fiscal Year 2022, we are concerned it can't keep pace with the headwinds and continued demand we are seeing. Congress can help the families we serve by providing additional funding for TEFAP food purchases in FY2022 spending legislation, building on the strong foundation of TEFAP food USDA already expects to provide in 2022.

The Community FoodBank of New Jersey is grateful for the continued partnership between the USDA, farmers, and agriculture partners to provide healthy, nutritious U.S. grown commodities to community members in need. We also look forward to continuing to work with Congress to ensure continued investments in TEFAP and other federal nutrition programs to serve families facing hunger.



We also hope that Congress will pass additional essential support programs for the people we serve in The Build Back Better Act, which is a strong down payment on the investments that are needed to drastically reduce hunger and poverty for millions of children nationwide. These provisions are a critical step forward for millions in our country struggling to make ends meet—particularly for children facing hunger in this country.

Conclusion

I hope my testimony has demonstrated the critical value of USDA food programs, TEFAP chief among them, to the work food banks do to address and prevent hunger among our neighbors. TEFAP’s stabilizing effect on the food supply as a reliable source of nutritious food for families in need has never been more important.

In the circumstances we face today, with more uncertainty in front of us than stability, I want to also be clear that despite the significant actions that have been taken, our concerns about the food supply keeping pace with need are serious. Any time there is a natural disaster or economic crisis, low-income families and individuals are the last to recover; this crisis has left no community untouched. Although the overall statistics of our national economy have rebounded, with low unemployment, the families I serve are still on a road to recovery.

For these reasons, our national network of food banks has requested - and I encourage this committee to support - an additional \$900 million for TEFAP in FY 2022 spending legislation. With investment from the federal government, the United States has the potential to emerge from this crisis stronger and better-positioned to meet the evolving needs of our communities and to end hunger in America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Carlos Rodriguez'.

Carlos Rodriguez
President & CEO
Community FoodBank of New Jersey

CFBNJ - Federal Awards & Contracts
Active / Awarded During 12/01/18 - 11/30/21

Reference Title	Name of Federal Award	CFDA Number	Awarding Federal Agency	Period	Amount Awarded
CFAP - Commodity	Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (Food)	10.130	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	04/01/20-06/30/21	\$ 1,148,921
CFAP - Commodity	Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (Food) [CFAP]	10.130	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	04/01/20-06/30/21	\$ 26,974,820
10.130 Total					\$ 28,123,741
TEFAP - TM	Trade Mitigation ERA Operational Funds (Admin)	10.170	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	01/01/20 - 12/31/21	\$ 300,554
TEFAP - TM	Trade Mitigation ERA Operational Funds (Admin)	10.170	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	01/01/20 - 12/31/20	\$ 924,268
10.170 Total					\$ 1,224,822
TEFAP - TM	Trade Mitigation ERA Operational Funds (Admin)	10.178	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/18 - 09/30/19	\$ 414,222
10.178 Total					\$ 414,222
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program	10.558	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/18 - 06/30/19	\$ 819,349
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program	10.558	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/19 - 06/30/20	\$ 517,810
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program	10.558	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/21 - 06/30/22	\$ 1,406,070
10.558 Total					\$ 2,743,229
ESFSP - COVID	Emergency Summer Food Service Program for Children (COVID)	10.559	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	04/01/20 - 06/30/20	\$ 108,182
ESFSP - COVID	Emergency Summer Food Service Program for Children (COVID)	10.559	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	04/01/20 - 06/30/21	\$ 151,080
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program for Children	10.559	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	06/23/19 - 06/30/19	\$ 128,855
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program for Children	10.559	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/18 - 08/31/18	\$ 235,099
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program for Children	10.559	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/19 - 08/31/19	\$ 103,120
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program for Children	10.559	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/19 - 08/31/19	\$ 162,940
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program for Children	10.559	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/20 - 06/30/20	\$ 93,833
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program for Children	10.559	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/20 - 08/31/20	\$ 159,035
ESFSP - COVID	Emergency Summer Food Service Program for Children (COVID)	10.559	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/20 - 06/30/20	\$ 436,604
ESFSP - COVID	Emergency Summer Food Service Program for Children (COVID)	10.559	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/20 - 06/30/21	\$ 79,785
10.559 Total					\$ 1,658,533
SNAP Outreach	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	10.561	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/18 - 09/30/20	\$ 708,221
SNAP-Ed	State Administrative Matching Grants for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	10.561	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/18 - 09/30/19	\$ 4,662,987
SNAP-Ed	State Administrative Matching Grants for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	10.561	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/19 - 09/30/20	\$ 3,810,123
SNAP Outreach	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	10.561	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/20 - 09/30/21	\$ 508,592
SNAP-Ed	State Administrative Matching Grants for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	10.561	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/20 - 09/30/21	\$ 2,889,425
SNAP Outreach	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	10.561	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/21 - 09/30/22	\$ 615,992
SNAP-Ed	State Administrative Matching Grants for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	10.561	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/21 - 09/30/22	\$ 3,187,775
10.561 Total					\$ 16,383,115
CSFP - Commodity	Commodities Supplement Food Program	10.565	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/18 - 06/30/19	\$ 3,178,231
CSFP - Commodity	Commodities Supplement Food Program	10.565	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/18 - 06/30/19	\$ 1,338,169
CSFP - Commodity	Commodities Supplement Food Program	10.565	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/20 - 06/30/21	\$ 3,568,117
CSFP - Commodity	Commodities Supplement Food Program	10.565	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/21 - 11/30/21	\$ 1,697,734
CSFP	Commodities Supplement Food Program	10.565	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/18 - 09/30/19	\$ 518,052
CSFP	Commodities Supplement Food Program	10.565	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/19 - 09/30/20	\$ 544,000
CSFP	Commodities Supplement Food Program	10.565	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/20 - 09/30/21	\$ 584,021
CSFP	Commodities Supplement Food Program	10.565	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/21 - 09/30/22	\$ 545,000
10.565 Total					\$ 11,973,324
NJ CARES	NJ CARES	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	01/01/21 - 06/30/21	\$ 10,600,000
USDA CARES	USDA-CARES	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	03/01/20 - 09/30/20	\$ 735,000
NJDA - COVID	NJDA COVID	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	03/01/21 - 09/30/21	\$ 5,200,000
TEFAP	Emergency Food Assistance Program (Admin)	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/18 - 06/30/19	\$ 738,126
TEFAP	Emergency Food Assistance Program (Admin)	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/19 - 06/30/20	\$ 1,319,478
TEFAP - Commodity	Emergency Food Assistance Program (Food)	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/19 - 06/30/20	\$ 45,696,052
TEFAP	Emergency Food Assistance Program (Admin) -TEFAP	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/20 - 06/30/21	\$ 1,231,329
TEFAP - CARES	Emergency Food Assistance Program (Admin) -TEFAP-CARES	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/20 - 06/30/21	\$ 631,825
TEFAP - Commodity	Emergency Food Assistance Program (Food) [GOV=USDA]	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/20 - 06/30/21	\$ 50,194,308
NJDA - State Food	NJDA CARES	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/20 - 12/01/20	\$ 2,650,000
TEFAP	Emergency Food Assistance Program (Admin)	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/21 - 11/30/21	\$ 382,188
TEFAP - Commodity	Emergency Food Assistance Program (Food)	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/21 - 11/30/21	\$ 18,186,599
TEFAP - FFCRA	Emergency Food Assistance Program (Admin) -TEFAP-FFCRA	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/20 - 09/30/21	\$ 956,371
NJDA - COVID	NJ CARES	10.568	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	10/01/21 - 09/30/22	\$ 10,600,000
10.568 Total					\$ 149,121,276
TEFAP - Commodity	Emergency Food Assistance Program (Food)	10.569	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	07/01/18 - 06/30/19	\$ 19,802,779
10.569 Total					\$ 19,802,779
TEFAP - NJDA/DCA/CSFRF	Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSFRF)	21.027	US Department of the Treasury	11/01/21 - 10/31/22	\$ 5,300,000
21.027 Total					\$ 5,300,000
USF	Universal Service Fund Assistance Outreach 2021	93.568	Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)	07/01/20 - 06/30/21	\$ 18,036
LIHEAP	Low Income Energy Assistance Program [LIHEAP] - Assistance Outreach 2021	93.568	Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)	10/01/20 - 09/30/21	\$ 18,772
93.568 Total					\$ 36,808
CSBG	Community Service Block Grant	93.569	Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)	08/01/19 - 09/30/19	\$ 286,588
CSBG	Community Service Block Grant	93.569	Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)	08/01/20 - 09/30/21	\$ 194,936
CSBG	Community Service Block Grant	93.569	Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)	06/01/21 - 09/30/21	\$ 58,667
93.569 Total					\$ 540,191
Grand Total					\$ 237,322,040