

March 8, 2023

Jennifer Vinci, MS, RDN, IBCLC  
Supervisor, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Program  
Community, Family Health, and Prevention Section  
Connecticut Department of Public Health  
410 Capitol Avenue, MS #11-HLS  
Hartford, CT 06134-0308

**Re: Connecticut Department of Public Health application for the State Physical Activity and Nutrition Program**

Dear Ms. Vinci,

This letter is written in strong support of the Connecticut Department of Public Health's (CT DPH) application for "The State Physical Activity and Nutrition Program," (SPAN), (CDC-RFA-DP-23-0012). The CT DPH has developed a robust application, and we are pleased to be able to partner with them.

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), a voluntary Council of Governments, was formed to initiate and implement regional programs of benefit to its 38 member municipalities representing nearly one million people. CRCOG has worked with CT DPH for more than four years on the initial round of SPAN funding resulting in the completion of more than 40 projects across the state including nine "quick build" demonstration projects aimed at enhancing the physical experience of bicyclists and pedestrians to make sure all users are safe and seen when seeking to be active, as well as a variety of other projects including educational webinars and trainings, small-area plans, design guides, improved nine communities with more than 60 bicycle racks, and more.

We have established a framework for soliciting projects, created an Active Living Active Transportation Committee to guide our process, and have established relationships with the other eight councils of government across the state to ensure these grant funds are distributed statewide to a variety of communities (25 total communities thus far representing more than one-third of the state's population) with varying contexts and built environments. We have found DPH to be a skilled partner on these projects, able to employ public health approaches that address the health of Connecticut residents, especially among disadvantaged populations.

This application expands upon the prior work CRCOG has administered on behalf of the physical activity portion of the SPAN program, CRCOG's Regional Complete Streets Plan and Policy to support and enable active transportation for all citizens in our region, the multitude of other such local and regional plans and policies, partnerships we have with physical activity and nutrition focused organizations, and the various efforts centered around Vision Zero in the State of Connecticut, including the creation of the State's Vision Zero Council in 2021. If awarded, CRCOG will expand the planning and project initiatives that bring public health through active transportation to the forefront.

In support of DPH's grant proposal, "The Connecticut State Physical Activity and Nutrition Program," CRCOG will contract with CT DPH to execute the following activities:

- **Administration, outreach, and evaluation.** Successful projects come from careful selection and coordination with communities with engaged, empowered champions. Until projects are identified, much work is needed to solicit interest and create scopes of work tailored to each community's needs.
- **Quick build demonstration projects and small-area plans.** To enhance the physical experience of our State's most vulnerable users, short-term infrastructure projects can be used to slow traffic, place a greater priority on pedestrians and bicyclists, and are a cost-effective evaluation tool to make decisions for longer-term changes. Additionally, plans to improve safe, equitable access to everyday destinations and to physical activity opportunities are the first step in catalyzing real solutions.
- **Statewide educational trainings.** Build off prior efforts to expand information on the importance of complete streets, training elementary schools how to teach bicycle education to children, or sharing information and best practices on newer initiatives such as Vision Zero.
- **Partnership development.** Explore opportunities to build on partnerships across local, regional, and state levels including, but not limited to:
  - o CT Department of Energy and Environment and CT Greenways Council to focus on improving connections to our greenways especially for our most disadvantaged communities.
  - o CT Foodshare and like-minded organizations to assess how transportation barriers – safe, continuous access to sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and transit – negatively impact our residents access to healthy food. Working at the intersection of transportation and nutrition, CRCOG plans to explore solutions to food insecurity and access to healthy food options to more holistically address health disparities.

We urge you to consider CT DPH's application for funding. If awarded, we have every confidence that CT DPH and our continued partnership has the capacity, experience, and proven record of success with previous SPAN program funding to provide safer and more equitable opportunities to improve health through physical activity for Connecticut residents.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart  
Executive Director

CC: CRCOG Policy Board and Transportation Committee  
R. Aloise, Director of Planning  
C. Radzins, Deputy Director of Planning