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August 27, 2021

The Honorable Jim McGovern
United States House of Representatives
370 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman McGovern,

My name is Misa Perron-Burdick and I am an OB/GYN at San Francisco General Hospital, an urban safety net hospital. I am also the Founder of the SF Patient Pantry, which provides healthy food to patients and their families through the support of the Food as Medicine Collaborative run by the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

I would like to tell you the story of Maria, a working mother of 2 and a leader in the Latinx community. At the beginning of her second trimester of pregnancy, Maria was diagnosed with diabetes. Living on a small income and experiencing food and housing insecurity due to COVID, Maria and her family depended on food from SNAP and local food banks. These programs are a lifeline for our communities, but often fail to provide the food that is both culturally appropriate and healthy for people with medical conditions. As such, Maria struggled to keep her blood sugars under control and was recommended to start insulin. Maria was motivated to avoid insulin because she knew it meant more clinic visits, risk of low blood sugar, and early induction of labor. Through the SF Patient Pantry, Maria began receiving food deliveries of fresh organic produce, whole grains, and proteins from local distributors. Within weeks, Maria's blood sugars normalized, and she was able to avoid insulin. A few months later, Maria delivered a beautiful and healthy baby boy who went home to two ecstatic older sisters.

Maria taught me that food *is* medicine. Insulin costs our healthcare system up to \$200 per week, not including syringes, glucometer supplies, or numerous clinical visits. By comparison, a food for a family of 4 costs \$50 per week. Instead of treating disease, healthy food prevents disease. Instead of putting money in the pockets of for-profit pharmaceutical companies, we create jobs and support businesses owned by our community. And don't forget the incalculable benefits that Maria's healthy eating habits have on her own family and community. The Food as Medicine Collaborative is what it means to care for, empower, and create healthy communities.

Sincerely,

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