April 27, 2022

Dear Appropriations Committee Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

I am requesting $1,000,000 in funding for A New Way of Life Safe Homes Women’s Reentry & Economic Development Initiative in fiscal year 2023.

The entity to receive funding for this project is A New Way of Life Reentry Project (ANWOL), located at 9512 South Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90002.

Resources for women to return to their communities after incarceration are limited and underfunded, even as women are the fastest-growing incarcerated population, up over 700% since the 1980s. Every year more than 2,500 women are released from California prisons, and over 15,000 women in California are currently on parole. For over two decades, A New Way of Life has offered a supportive “welcome home” to assist women to heal from substance abuse and incarceration, exit parole, and to transition back to their families and their communities successfully.

Women generally go to prison for different reasons and have very different needs than their male counterparts. Incarceration of women often leaves behind children and others requiring care, and returning home means re-integrating into an often-broken family unit. Despite the increased rates of putting women into prison, little or no focus is often given to what happens to them when the come out of prison. A New Way of Life is one of the very few organizations demonstrating cost-effective ways of helping women succeed in returning to their families, their communities and their local economies. This model needs to be expanded and replicated as much as possible to meet the urgent needs of the increased numbers of women who have had contact with the criminal justice system and need support to heal and repair their lives, and break the cycle of trauma and disruption for their children.

ANWOL’s family reunification department is an innovative model that addresses parents’ needs in a holistic way, helping them navigate all interactions with the courts necessary to petition for or defend child custody rights during and after incarceration. These encounters range across dependency courts, family courts, probate courts, and sometimes criminal courts if there are unresolved charges.

This is an excellent use of taxpayer funds because support for women re-entering society has proven to reduce recidivism, homelessness, encounters with the child welfare system and parole violations. Not only does this save lives and improve family health but it is much more cost effective for society.

I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project.

Sincerely,

Karen Bass
Member of Congress