

July 22, 2009

First Lady Michelle Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Subject: Please Help Us Save Our Community Garden and Feed the Hungry in Our Town

Dear Mrs. Obama:

We are requesting your personal assistance in saving our organic community garden. As First Lady of the United States of America, who has planted an organic garden in her front lawn, your strong advocacy for eating healthy foods and providing for those who are hungry set an example for all of us.

The St. John's United Church of Christ Organic Community Garden and Labyrinth has been the primary provider of in-season fresh produce to the Phoenixville Area Community Services Food Bank for the past 15 years. The land we have farmed since 1997 is owned by the Housing Authority (HACC) of Chester County (Pennsylvania) and sits behind a partially occupied housing project. It is one of the few non-toxic sites in Phoenixville (a former iron and steel city). The garden and labyrinth provide a much needed oasis for residents of the surrounding neighborhood.

For the past five years, we have tried to work with the leadership of the Housing Authority of Chester County (HACC) even providing alternative plans to their proposed expansion project which would permit the garden to stay "as is, where is" while still maintaining the maximum number of housing units. In January 2008, the Phoenixville Borough Council passed a resolution asking that the community garden remain "as is, where is." The garden's lease expires in December 2009.

Instead of working with us, HACC's plan provides an area only 1/3 the size of our current plot, in the shade and over a to-be-backfilled railroad bed. Currently, we feed 400 people per year. In this new area, we could not feed more than 75 people per year.

With your phone call to HUD leadership, we hope that a path forward, maximizing housing units on the HACC property while maintaining the current footprint of the garden and labyrinth, can be achieved.

Sincerely,

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please add your personal message regarding the value of the community garden and labyrinth*