



SALLIE ALCORN
Houston City Council Member
At-Large, Position 5

March 17, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Appropriations Committee Members,

I am writing to strongly endorse the Houston Botanic Garden's request for FY2024 Community Project Funding toward critically needed enhancements designed to attract and enhance the visitor experience. Recently opened, in 2020, the 132-acre urban Garden is a vital environmental and economic asset to an underserved area of southeast Houston on Sims Bayou. Its ongoing growth and development are essential for promoting sustainability, wellness, education, and community engagement. The Houston Botanic Garden has identified several critical projects that would promote the Garden's mission of enriching life through discovery, education, and the conservation of plants and the natural environment. These projects include:

- Event & Education Building (\$3,357,000) - This 10,000 square foot state-of-the-art complex will provide much-needed education and event space, storage space for equipment and supplies, and a commercial and demonstration kitchen that doubles as a classroom. This facility will be devoted to the Garden's own educational programs and events, as well as private event rentals.
- Greenhouses (\$935,000) - The construction of the five-production greenhouse will enable the Garden to create the custom, controlled environment required to cultivate and store plants and crops desired for its gardens. Greenhouses will allow the Garden to produce seasonal color and vegetables planned for its gardens instead of purchasing and planting whatever is available. Funding requested would support the installation of the first greenhouse and the preparation for utilities (electrical, water, and gas) for four additional future greenhouses. These facilities will enable the Garden to produce fresh, organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs that will be donated to the community. Produce will be donated to Kids Meals, a local nonprofit which delivers free healthy meals to children in need. Excess production will be available to residents.

- Children's Play Element & Shade Structures (\$1,056,481) - The addition of a Children's Play Element will offer children a play structure for crawling and climbing. Visitors currently experience considerable exposure to the sun, particularly during the hotter months of the year. Families have no shade along much of the walking trails.

With your support, new facilities and attractions will increase attendance and visitor spending, generating additional revenue for the Garden and surrounding community. The Greenhouse project will produce fresh, organic fruits and vegetables for the underserved community, addressing food insecurity. Access to outdoor spaces and natural environments will promote mental and physical health. With 20,000+ visitors annually its first year, the Garden is projected to have an annual impact of \$19.6M to \$24.4M and create 135 jobs when fully operational.

This request aligns with the committee's goals of supporting projects that focus on the beautification of urban land, conservation of open spaces, natural resources, and provision of recreational opportunities for the community, therefore, I strongly urge you to favorably support the Houston Botanic Garden's request for FY2024 Community Project Funding toward these vitally needed projects.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Sallie Alcorn