

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1501

April 27, 2022

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, FDA, &
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Andy Harris
Acting Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, FDA, &
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Harris:

As you begin crafting the fiscal year 2023 Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, & Related Agencies Appropriations bill, I respectfully request that you include \$500,000 in community project funding for the City of Gilbertville Emergency Services Building, located at 5223 S. Raymond Road, Gilbertville, IA 50634.

The rural, underrepresented area covered by the Gilbertville Volunteer Fire Department is in desperate need of a new emergency services building to provide efficient, safe, and effective fire and rescue services to its 2,800 residents. The Gilbertville Fire District encompasses the City of Gilbertville, the unincorporated community of Washburn, and the Fox, Cedar, and Poyner townships – this totals 64 miles of state roads, highways, and interstate. The Gilbertville Volunteer Fire Department is a signatory of the Black Hawk County Mutual Aid agreement, which makes all the department's equipment, personnel, and services available for use by eight other Black Hawk County fire departments, if and when requested. Despite providing life-saving services to such an expansive area, the Gilbertville Fire Department depends on its twenty-three volunteers as the entire emergency response team.

The current public safety building was built in the 1940s as a gas station. The building now houses the police department, five full-size emergency service vehicles, and a meeting/training room that is too small to hold indoor meetings. The limited space causes significant disruptions and delays that directly threaten the fire department's ability to save lives and prevent property and farm crop loss. The current public safety building is too small to house all the necessary equipment and vehicles, creating slower-response times as volunteers must navigate the packed facility and make stops to retrieve equipment from off-site locations, including the Fire Chief's personal home, before responding to emergencies. The building is surrounded by street parking and shares a block with a church and a school. The congestion caused by daily activity, and

especially by special church or school events, cause difficulty for the volunteers to park their civilian vehicles and navigate emergency vehicles trucks to quickly respond to calls. The location and size of the emergency services building directly impacts the safety of all residents served by the Gilbertville Fire District.

The city has been raising funds for a new emergency service building for years, and has approximately \$300,000 raised, but the cost estimate has nearly doubled since 2020 due to inflation, supply chain issues, labor shortages, and other price increases that are arguably caused by federal policy and current events beyond Gilbertville's control. Nonetheless, Gilbertville's volunteer firefighters continue to serve their community in the face of these challenges.

This small, rural community has united to demonstrate how important this project is to their safety and overall wellbeing. I received a total of 49 community letters of support, which is the equivalent to six percent of the City of Gilbertville's entire population advocating on behalf of this project. Families and residents deserve the peace of mind knowing that the brave volunteers dedicated to ensuring Gilbertville's safety have the resources and equipment to do so. I strongly urge the Committee to include this community project funding request in the FY23 Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, & Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Ashley Hinson

Member of Congress

Committee on Appropriations