

Good afternoon,

I'm reaching out as a Cass County veteran, father, and one who supports HB 1553 school meals funded by the legacy fund.

In 2022, we were lucky enough to receive a grant for food insecurity. All those funds were soon exhausted for the Bob Woodruff Foundation grant assisting veterans with funds to fight food insecurity in Cass County. The funds of \$3,335.00, were used to purchase grocery gift cards at "Hornbacher's" to be used at their numerous locations in the Fargo area to help feed and to continue our pledge to assist our county veterans and their families. The total number of veterans served with the cards directly was 32. Three cards were distributed to a chaplain who knew some veteran parishioners who needed assistance. The total number of family members who were helped was 72. Notable outcomes of the cards were as follows: one given to a veteran's widow so she could supply food for her guests at his service lunch, a wife taking care of her sick veteran husband with groceries after being in the hospital for months, a single veteran father taking care of his kids with having food in the home and a veteran named Ray Pizarro taking care of his spouse and their two service animals.

Recent data has shown that if families have food, it will in turn affect the way the children grow and learn. A balanced diet and healthy snacks benefit in multiple ways. Proper nutrition provides the energy and nutrients needed for physical growth, strengthens the immune system to fight illness, and supports brain development. As a result, children are often healthier and perform better academically, as they can concentrate and retain information more effectively. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats sets the foundation for both physical and intellectual well-being.

Please keep universal school meals moving forward as it is very difficult for veterans to ask for help let alone for their children. I would deeply appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Deery', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christopher J. Deery

VSO

Cass County