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Sustainable Economic Growth
& Quality of Place

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Ms. Debra Beavin
U.S. Economic Development Administration
900 Market Street, Room 602
Philadelphia, PA 19107

August 24, 2023

Dear Ms. Beavin:

It is my pleasure to express my support for the City of East Providence's application to support the Oldham Incubator feasibility study project. As a representative of Grow Smart Rhode Island, I can attest to the City's clear vision, well-researched strategy, commitment, and leadership in developing and supporting small businesses through entrepreneurship that builds the capacity of their residents.

Grow Smart RI is a 501(c)3 nonprofit public interest group dedicated to advancing neighborhood revitalization, environmental stewardship, and economic opportunity for all. Main Street and Downtown revitalization has long been a cornerstone of our mission and we seek to influence economic development in the state such that the benefits goes to the many instead of the few. We have recently worked in partnership with the City of East Providence and Roger Williams University to develop two phases of a Main Street Revitalization Plan for the Riverside district in East Providence, in which the former Oldham school building is located. The germination for the Incubator project originated with the students engaged in the development of this revitalization plan, who identified this project as a recommended strategy to bring much needed revitalization to the district. The City of East Providence has also participated as an active member of Grow Smart RI's Main Street Steering Committee since its inception in January 2022.

Through these partnerships and other projects, I have observed firsthand the competency of the City's staff and fully endorse their ability to carry out a complex project such as the Oldham Incubator, including a feasibility study. Grow Smart RI staff have also become more intimately familiar with the needs of East Providence residents. Locally as well as within the context of Rhode Island's overall economic development and entrepreneurial ecosystem, we feel strongly that this project will successfully fill necessary gaps in the state and local economy. The project's focus on food, specifically baking and gluten-free food production, as well as technology, sustainability/renewable energy, the arts, and the intersection of all of these areas, is consistent with Grow Smart RI's opinion of needed facilities and services. We are especially excited about the plan's intention to integrate East Providence High School students into entrepreneurship pathways.

Please accept this letter of support in conjunction with the City of East Providence's application to the U.S. Economic Development Administration for support of this project. We thank you so much for your consideration! If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at (401) 273-5711 or at jfinkle@growsmartri.org.

Sincerely,

Jillian Finkle
Director of Special Projects, Grow Smart RI

