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cityofhope.org

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This letter is submitted to request funding in support of a clinical and community-based initiative designed to address a critical barrier to care for patients with head and neck cancer. Individuals undergoing radiation therapy frequently experience dysphagia and significant challenges in maintaining adequate nutrition. High-calorie nutritional shakes are an essential component of dysphagia intervention; however, many patients are unable to afford these supplements consistently. Financial hardship may contribute to reduced adherence to swallowing-preservation strategies, increased treatment-related complications, and higher rates of feeding tube placement.

To mitigate this barrier, speech-language pathologists within our institution have established a community partnership with a local food bank to provide free high-calorie nutritional shakes to patients with dysphagia who are experiencing food insecurity. Outcome measures include data on patient demographics, food security levels, number of shakes provided per patient, and cost savings per patient.

This program is expected to improve access to nutritional supplements, serving as a pilot model for addressing food insecurity as a barrier to equitable cancer care and underscoring the role of community partnerships. The annual cost of operating this program is approximately \$10,000. A private donor has generously provided \$20,000, which will support the immediate continuation of services; however, ongoing funding is essential to maintain and expand access to these resources for vulnerable patients. Continued investment will directly reduce disparities and contribute to a more resource-connected community.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

**Taylor Wilde, MS-CCC-SLP, BCS-S**

**Mercedes Currier, MA, CCC-SLP**

Department of Speech-Language Pathology

City of Hope, Duarte, CA