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To the Martha's Vineyard Commission,

Island Health Care would like to express our strong support for IGI's effort to find a permanent home for the Pantry to ensure continuous support for Islanders in need now and into the future.

As you may know, the social determinants of health (SDH, more recently being referred to as health-related social needs (HRSN)) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes, and include access to education, transportation, social inclusion, and of course, nutritious food. As described by the World Health organization, "The SDH have an important influence on health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status" and numerous studies suggest that SDH account for between 30-55% of health outcomes. This highlights just how imperative it is for the health of our community that the Island has a stable, permanent Food Pantry that ensures that everyone has access to food.

Given this intricate connection between food and health/wellness, the Food Pantry is a necessity for the population we serve. IHC and IGI share a goal of making good health accessible to all, and given that the Pantry does not require documentation to receive food support, it is more accessible to many in the Island's immigrant population than most government food support programs. This is absolutely critical to the health of our vibrant immigrant and migrant communities. Further, the Pantry ensures critical food access for the most vulnerable in our community, including those facing illness and those who fall on hard times when they or someone in their household are unable to work due to health-related conditions. Our Community Health Workers, who are tasked with connecting patients to the resources they need, know that the Pantry is one of the best and most accessible options for Islanders experiencing food insecurity.

Given the importance of the services that the Pantry provides, we hope you share in our belief that the Pantry needs a permanent location to ensure continuity and stability for the Island community.

We encourage the Commission to support IGI's plans for the building on Dukes Avenue to help ensure all people on Martha's Vineyard have access to the food they need for many years to come.

Many thanks,

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9/28/2023

Lucy Hackney, Chief Operating Officer