

3309 Burlington Rd.
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Dear Grant Review Committee,

This letter is to issue my full support to Gerard Mcleod and his farming operation. I have had the opportunity to work with Gerard over the past eight months, since I transferred to Guilford County to be the Commercial Horticulture Agent. Gerard is an amazing farmer that is truly passionate about plants, nutrition, and community development. It is clear to me that Gerard has a heart of gold and a passion that drives him to give back to his family and community.

Like so many people in the world, Gerard has a past filled with misdirection and poor choices, but since his incarceration has ended, he has spent a considerable amount of effort and dedication contributing back to the society which his younger self had mistreated. Gerard is in my opinion a wonderful individual with an amazing head on his shoulders. Being predominately self-taught, Gerard has an amazing understanding of plants and is able to educate others about farming practices in a down to earth manner. I have the utmost faith that if given the opportunity to receive this grant, Gerard will be able to secure his operation with the much-needed deer fencing and continue to enrich the land with the aid of the chipper that he plans on purchasing. Both purchases are crucial to Gerard's success. The deer in his area are exceptionally hazardous to Gerard's vegetables and would destroy any new fruit trees that he may install. The wood chipper/ mulcher is a tool that will be heavily used in his soil building/ fertility program. By utilizing scrape brush from his property and those in the surrounding areas, Gerard will be able to increase the organic material in his soil, leading to healthier plants and less disease problems. Through this practice, Gerard will be able to reduce his chemical fertilizer applications and eliminate the majority of his weed pressure due the use of the mulch generated. These two tools will directly affect his bottom line in a positive manner, by offering his farm protection from wildlife and providing him with the ability to increase his operation without fear of destruction.

Gerard is an amazing farmer and due to a troubled past, he is at a major disadvantage in the area of acquiring loans. He is a very hard worker that is able to keep a full-time job as well as operate his business. Over the past few years, Gerard has built a small farming operation in an untraditional manner. Since his access to land has been limited, he has utilized rented and borrowed patches of land to create small batches of vegetables and transplants. Over the last year, he has been able to begin transforming a small piece of land that is owned by his wife's family. It is critical that Gerard secure the borders of this new operation in order to ensure its success. It is Gerard's eventual goal to be able to farm full time and develop a homestead on the new property. I believe that if he is able to receive this funding, it will step his operation up to the point that he can focus on it in a more full-time manner, providing him with the opportunity to be a true entrepreneur.

I wholeheartedly support Gerard and encourage you all to join me in supporting his operation. Please feel free to contact me at (336)383-9634 with any questions or concerns that you have about this letter or anything on Gerard's grant application.

Sincerely,



Ben Grandon

Guilford County Commercial Horticulture Agent