

March 2, 2023

Dear Chair Lanpher,

I am writing on behalf of the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry (Committee on Agriculture) regarding the FY24 Budget. As indicated on the attached chart, the Committee on Agriculture recommends agreeing with the Governor's budget proposal, except as noted below.

The Committee on Agriculture requests that the Committee on Appropriations include in the Budget the following one-time amounts that were not funded, or were included at different levels, in the Governor's budget proposal:

- \$500,000 to Salvation Farms to help fund a model surplus crop-processing facility to serve the state's institutional and charitable food programs
- \$400,000 to the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund to support three separate proposals:
  - Independent Retail Grocers Project (\$100,000)
  - Beef on Dairy Project (\$250,000)
  - Alternative Access Land Models Project (\$50,000)
- \$250,000 for pilot funding for H.205, a bill establishing the Small Farms Diversification and Transition Program, which would be in addition to the base funding request below.
- \$8,850,000 to fund Agriculture Development Grants per the Administration's proposal for Meat, Produce and Maple processing

(total of the above four items equals \$10,000,000)

The Committee on Agriculture also supports the following allocations to base funding that were not included in the Governor's proposal:

- \$500,000 from the General Fund to fund the Local Purchasing Incentive, consistent with FY22 and FY23
- \$250,000 in new, ongoing funding for the Small Farms Diversification and Transition Program (H.205)
- \$100,000 to the Sustainable Jobs Fund to replace lost grant funding for the Farm to Plate Investment Program
- \$2,638,000 additional funding to the Natural Resources Conservation Council, to support the work of the state's 14 Natural Resource Conservation Districts,

The Committee on Agriculture would also like to highlight its support for the following existing base funding amounts:

- \$500,000 for the Farm to School Program
- \$200,000 for Fairs & Field Days.

The Committee on Agriculture strongly supports a total of \$4,000,000 to the Working Lands Initiative and would endorse as large an increase as possible in the base funding amount.

In addition, the Committee on Agriculture would like to express its support for the following proposals being recommended by other House Standing Committees:

- Serve, Learn & Earn (Commerce Committee)
- Land Access Opportunity Board (General & Housing Committee)
- VT Foodbank and other Food Security Programs such as Meals on Wheels (Human Services Committee)
- Digitization of the Current Use program (Ways & Means Committee)
- Rural Industry and Development Fund grants (Commerce Committee)
- Full Funding for the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

Finally, please note that the Committee on Agriculture has recently passed H.165, the Universal School Meals Bill, and requests the following appropriation for FY24:

- \$27,000,000 (est) from the Education Fund

The members of the Committee on Agriculture present today voted unanimously to support these recommendations. Please contact me if you need additional information or have questions regarding any of these recommendations.

Rep. David Durfee  
Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry