

February 8, 2023

Hello. My name is Jodie Stewart-Ruck. I am a resident of Middletown Springs and I am the Assistant Superintendent of Mill River Unified Union School District. I am affiliated with Farm to School education through my role in school administration and as a parent member of the Farm to School Team at Middletown Springs Elementary, where I have three children in attendance.

I am asking for your support for the Farm to School and Early Childhood program with a level funded base appropriation of \$500,000 for Fiscal Year 2024. I am also asking for your support for the Local Purchasing Incentive program for schools at \$500,000 in base funding.

Farm to School education and Local Purchasing Funding is important to me because as an educational professional I see the ways in which health and nutrition can have a major positive impact on child development and academic success. In addition, Local Purchasing directly supports our neighbors and state economy in important ways.

Farm to School education removes socio-economic barriers in local and healthy foods. The taste tests and access students are given has a life-long impact. As a foster and adoptive parent, I have seen the ways in which this program opens up knowledge and excitement about new tastes and opportunities. As a school administrator, I have seen students' eyes light up with the ability to access hands-on learning and learn life skills.

Again, please support the Farm to School, Early Childhood and Local Purchasing Programs. Thank you so much.