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Public Hearing on the Governor's Recommended Fiscal Year 2027 Budget
Re: Support $500,000 in base funding for NOFA Vermont's Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share programs

My name is Vanessa Rose and I am the co-owner of Leaping Bear Farm in Reading, Vermont. I and writing to advocate for $500,000 in base funding in FY2027 to sustain the Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share programs. First I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for the invaluable support provided by the Crop Cash Plus program, and for the Committee's time today to hear about the truly positive impact of that initiative for everyone involved. Through my involvement with multiple Vermont Farmers' Markets we have seen the impact of the Crop Cash and crop Cash Plus Program on our farm and community.

I co-own a Certified Real Organic, pasture-raised poultry and sheep farm which is now entering our 8th growing season. Using regenerative practices, we produce high-quality, nourishing food and build healthy soil, creating climate resilience in Vermont. We grow our food for our local community, which has led to our participation in Farmers' Markets through out the state (including Putney, Brattleboro and Londonderry/West River.

Crop Cash (Plus) has been essential in keeping the nourishing foods we grow accessible to low-income Vermonters while providing a reliable, fair price for farmers like us. We have seen first hand how the program improves community health, strengthens farmers markets, and deepens social connections, with a significant portion of our sales (and those of our fellow farmers) coming from participation in this program.

We believe a nutritious diet is preventative health care at its finest. Food prices are rising as value is diminishing, underscoring the need for consistent state support to help people access fed healthy food. Food security can and should be achieved for everyone who lives in Vermont. At the same time, we can support our farmers and ensure they can profit from growing the healthy food we all need and want.

Please appropriate $500,000 in FY2027 to support local food security programs - Crop Cash, Crop Cash Plus, and Farm Share. Thank you for considering this request.