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AND FOREST PRODUCTS

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To: Rep. Johnson
From: Rep. Partridge
Date: March 12, 2015
Subject: Agriculture Funding Priorities

The House Agriculture and Forest Products Committee has reviewed and supports the provisions relating to agriculture in the governor's proposed FY 2016 budget. The committee strongly recommends the appropriation of additional funds to provide full support for critical agricultural programs that have been underfunded or eliminated in that budget. Specifically:

- Working Lands should receive a total of \$1.5 million, which was the governor's recommend for FY 2015.
- Farm to School should receive a total of \$140,000.
- Agricultural Fair stipends should be restored to \$175,000.
- The 2+2 program should receive an additional \$60,000 to continue the program.

In addition, the committee has deep concerns about the elimination of the Milk Quality Enhancement Program position and strongly recommends that it be fully funded.

These programs are critical to supporting Vermont's agricultural renaissance and maintaining the character of our state. The programs provide both revenue and positive health benefits for Vermonters.

We ask the Appropriations Committee to allocate the funds requested. If current revenue projections cannot provide funding for these important programs, we urge that these priorities be at the top of the list when an improved economy brings in additional revenue for FY2016.

Our Committee is committed to providing sustainable funding for these critically important programs. In support of this commitment, we are working on a bill that will provide additional revenues to help meet this goal through a dedicated fund.