

From: Peggy Farabaugh [peggy@vermontwoodsstudios.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 14, 2017 1:57 PM
To: Theresa Utton; Rebecca Buck
Subject: Request for \$1Million appropriation to the Working Lands Grant Fund

Dear Senator Buck and Representative Utton-Jerman,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. I am here to request a \$1Million appropriation to the Working Lands Grant Fund. My husband and I own a small business in the Vermont furniture industry. Our company, Vermont Woods Studios is a grateful recipient of a Working Lands grant in 2013. The grant was essential to the expansion of our business and we were subsequently able to create 4 jobs and retain 9. We believe this is only the start of our expansion and are working hard to create further growth.

We call Vermont the "Fine Furniture Capital of America". Our state has the natural resources, the infrastructure and the brilliant people to make this vision a reality. We also have a 250 year legacy of furniture making to build upon. You probably are aware that in the 17th, 18th & 19th centuries almost every town in Vermont had woodworkers making furniture, tools and wooden utensils. Wood products were the single most important manufacturing industry in Vermont. Wood furniture, wooden cutting boards and bowls, bowling pins, baskets, drumsticks, toys, musical instruments, golf tees, cheese boxes, wooden dolls, gun racks, Scrabble tiles, snowshoes, clothes pins, and wooden shipping boxes were exported to customers all over the U.S. and abroad. Then came globalization.

The forest products industry can be revived to fulfill it's natural & historic role as an economic engine for Vermont. Many entrepreneurs are interested in keeping the legacy alive by leveraging the iconic Vermont brand. But they need encouragement and access to capital in order to re-ignite the industry.

Competition is fierce. Many quintessentially American companies have moved production abroad and are bringing inferior products back to the USA for cheap prices. Amish companies have become formidable competitors over the last 10 years as they have utilized the Internet to sell their wares. Vermont is lagging behind and we want to catch up. We can catch up. We have the people and the ideas to do it. We need some seed money.

Fully funding the Working Lands initiative could result in hundreds of additional jobs and millions of dollars in tax revenue. It is high time Vermont took it's rightful place in the American furniture and forests products industry. With your support we will.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Peggy & Ken Farabaugh

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Peggy Farabaugh

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