



February 13, 2017

To: Members of the VT Senate and House Appropriations Committees:

First, thank you very much for holding public hearings around Vermont to take public comments on the Governor's proposed FY18 State Budget. Unfortunately, travel on the evening of the St. Johnsbury public hearing proved to be difficult due to the significant snowstorm we received, so I'm submitting my comments in writing.

Second, I will acknowledge the budget challenges that any administration and the legislature experiences in Vermont in any year. There are always competing interests and priorities that certainly make budgeting a balancing act. Thank you for your efforts in this regard.

The new Administration and many in the Legislature this year are focused on improving economic development and organizations like NVDA support this. Strengthening existing businesses, attracting and growing new businesses, and creating opportunities for people to work in Vermont is important for our future. We especially need to retain programs and funding that allow this to happen. Programs or initiatives that NVDA would like to see supported are:

Vermont Training Program – the additional funding proposed by the Governor for this program will help to address one of the most significant challenges we see in the Northeast Kingdom today – the lack of an available skilled workforce.

Vermont Small Business Development Center – the additional funding proposed by the Governor for this organization will bolster the team of individuals working directly on the ground with small businesses and entrepreneurs, thus ensuring business needs are met consistently and statewide.

The Working Lands Enterprise Fund – Established in 2012, this fund has been critical for strengthening businesses and creating jobs in rural areas of Vermont. In the Northeast Kingdom, we have seen significant growth in value-added food and forest businesses, especially in communities like Hardwick. NVDA supports increasing to \$1 million, the amount budgeted by the Governor for this important program.

Thank you for your consideration and support for these programs. Please contact me at dsnedeker@nvda.net or (802) 748-8303 if there are any questions.

David Snedeker
Executive Director
Northeastern VT Development Association