

February 25th, 2019
VT State Budget Hearing
Morristown, VT

Testimony on behalf of increased funding for Farm to School:

My name is Reeve Basom, and I am the Education and Agriculture Coordinator at the Center for an Agricultural Economy in Hardwick, working in close partnership with the schools of the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union to increase student and community engagement through place-based food systems education.

The Vermont Legislature's support for investments in Farm to School has strengthened and broadened the impact of these programs across the state, reaching more students and communities, and catalyzing increasingly effective coordination and technical assistance. But current funding needs to be increased in order to support all of the schools and communities eager to engage in this rich, effective programming.

In my own experience, I see Farm to School nourishing not only bodies, but also relationships. Community fabric is strengthened, sense of place is woven meaningfully into education, students become connected to opportunities and a vision for the future of their hometowns, and learning experiences are engaging and joyful. In these ways and more, Farm to School is in alignment with and actively supports the work of responding to childhood trauma, promoting school-community alignment, and strengthening local economies. And, Farm to School is so often at the center of a sense of pride that buoys and nourishes community vitality.

Vermont is celebrated as a nationwide leader in Farm to School, but without expanded funding, the benefits of Farm to School can not be realized statewide. I urge the legislature to consider an increased base appropriation of \$500,000 for Farm to School and see this as a unique and exciting opportunity to invest with confidence in a program with significant and proven impact.

Respectfully,
Reeve Basom