

My name is Sara Behrsing. I am from Hardwick, Vermont. I am connected with Farm to School as an educator at the Hardwick Elementary School.

I would like to thank the legislators for their support in the past increasing the state investment in Farm to School and for expanding its reach to more schools and early childhood providers.

As an educator at Hardwick Elementary I have had the benefit of working closely with Reeve Bascom and Bethany Dunbar from the Center for an Agricultural Economy. During the grant period we were able to deepen our collaboration with this key community partner and increase our capacity to develop and sustain programs such as Fiber Day (with guest artisans, hands-on art and science related to local animal fiber, local cheese taste-testing), Classroom Kitchen projects; such as baking bread for a whole year for the food pantry, gleaning field trips, and the use of community gardens to expand school garden curriculum and food for our annual harvest dinner.

What I love about the projects we do is that the students are a part of the project from beginning to end. One project involved planting 300 pumpkin seeds and growing them in our classroom and then transplanting them with help from a group of high-school students. Throughout the summer students, teachers and Reeve tended the plants. In the fall the same students harvested the pumpkins. The whole school participated in carving the pumpkins for the Annual Hardwick Town Pumpkin walk.

I would like to ask the committee not to reduce Farm to School funding from FY19's appropriation of \$231,000, but increase it if you can to \$500,000/year in order to achieve their goal of getting into 75% of Vermont's schools by 2025. 2019 Farm to School grant applications came from 13 counties, but available funding only met 38% of requests.

Thank you for listening and for considering a base appropriation of \$500,000 for Farm to School.