



February 25, 2019

From: Allan Reetz, Public Relations Director for Hanover Co-op Food Stores

My name is Allan Reetz and I am the Public Relations Director for Hanover Co-op Food Stores (Hanover, Lebanon, White River Junction). Since 1936, members of this consumer cooperative have been committed to concern for community and support for other locally owned businesses.

Today, as a cooperative with stores and facilities in both Vermont and New Hampshire, we are pleased to have 157 Vermont residents on our workforce.

Yet, looking beyond our mission statement or employment statistics, a business like ours also needs a strong local economy. Vermont producers and farms help make that possible.

From Brattleboro to Grand Isle, Derby to Bennington, we source about 3,000 items from 231 Vermont businesses, food producers and farms. The overwhelming majority of those Vermont businesses are small or tiny. Their stability matters to us.

In my role as director of public relations at the Hanover Co-op Food Stores, I'm involved in a wide range of community issues. High on our cooperative's list of priorities is paid family and medical leave insurance. I urge you to support passage of H. 107 as currently written.

We have all been touched by a serious illness striking oneself or a family member. Of course, many of us have enjoyed the birth of a child. Yet, even that brings with it the challenges of transitioning to parenthood. Now imagine your newborn child has complications. (Maybe that has actually happened to you). Perhaps you have an aging parent whose health is failing. Cancer seems to touch us all in one way or another. In each of those scenarios, being able to take time off without risking your job or negatively affecting your income to care for family and/or self is vital.

Throughout this year the Hanover Co-op will continue its work to advocate for a strong, universal paid family and medical leave program in Vermont and I am here tonight to encourage you to prioritize including an appropriation for any startup costs associated with the Vermont program. This universal program is essential for Vermonters and Vermont small businesses.

**Nourish. Cultivate. Cooperate.**