

Testimony for the Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations

Monday, February 25th, 2019, St Johnsbury House, 6-7 pm

(**Judy:** Introduction) Good evening I am **Judy Ross**, and I am **Kristen Huntington**. We are both teachers at the Concord School, as well as the Co-Coordinator for the Farm to School Program there.

(**Kris:** Thank you)

We want to start by thanking you for your support of Farm to School in the past:

- for increasing the state investment in Farm to School
- and for expanding its reach to more schools and early childhood providers.

Concord School has been the recipient of \$17,500 over the past 3 years, money which has been instrumental in improving the culture and fabric of our school community.

It has made a real difference at the Concord School!!!!

(**Judy:** Make the ask)

We are asking for you to, at the very least, sustain current FY 19 funding of \$231,000 for the Farm to School Network. This money is currently making a significant and measurable positive difference in the Concord School community. But more than that, we ask that you add \$269,000/year to this figure in the State budget for a total of \$500,000, so the Farm to School Network can achieve the goal of impacting 75% of all Vermont schools by 2025.

(**Kris:** Share a fact)

According to Hunger Free Vermont, 1 in 7 Vermont children face the adverse childhood experience (ACEs) of hunger. Helping more kids eat school meals is crucial to helping all children to grow up healthy and succeed in school.

This statistic really hits home for us at the Concord School, as our enrollment is **98% below Poverty Level**. That puts us at much higher than 1 in 7, but you wouldn't know it from walking in our doors. Students at Concord know they are recognized as a "Farm to School" school and they are taking charge of their health and their futures.

PERSONAL ANECDOTE: (Both)

Judy: It's hard to overstate the positive impact FTS has had on the Concord School. It has helped us create and build on increasing momentum of positive change that has become an integral part of the culture and fabric of our school. FTS is empowering kids to develop

healthy habits through education, cooking classes, taste tests, menu planning and collaboration with our cafeteria chefs. FTS money is supporting new awareness and opportunities for both teachers and students by leveraging connections between our school, our community, and our regional agricultural resources. Learning has become relevant as a foundation for future educational and economic choices as VT citizens.

Kris: We are thankful for the grant, as it is enabling us to redesign our campus around a community garden which will be located adjacent to our Baker's Space and to the community food shelf, Sid's Pantry. Farm to school has enabled

- High quality professional development for teachers to embed FTS lessons in regular curriculum plans
- Taste tests of local, fresh foods
- Harvest of the Month activities shared at monthly Community Meetings
- Partnerships with local farmers: Field trips, classroom visits
- FTS @ KEAP: Kingdom East Afterschool Program Cooking, planning, planting
- Schoolwide Trimester Themes: 1) Community celebrated in Fall Festival 2) Healthy Choices celebrated at Health Fair and Empty Bowl Dinner. 3) Where does your food come from? celebrated in community garden workday and picnic
- Community connections with Concord Community Health Center and Sid's Pantry., located at our school

Judy: We could go on, but we hope you get the picture. Farm to School monies in future state budgets is well-spent as an investment in Vermont's educational and economic future.

Kris: WRAP UP:

Thank you for listening to Concord's story and for considering a base appropriation of \$500,000 for Farm to School to help sustain this robust momentum. More Vermont schools deserve to have access to the Farm to School experience.

It's a "Win-Win" for all of us.