

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Food Security Coalition to thank you for including school meal program COVID-related costs in your plan to provide \$40 million in CARES Act funding for K-12 schools. This will make a tremendous difference in the ability of school meal programs to function safely and to effectively serve all students when schools reopen in the fall by allowing them implement necessary staffing and safety changes, and by allowing them to recover the unbudgeted funds they have spent in this school year during school closures to meet the challenges of the pandemic.

We respectfully recommend that rather than creating two funding pools, each tied to a different fiscal year, that you create one pool of \$40 million for the March 2020 - December 2020 period covered by the CARES Act funds. This will avoid creating an unfunded gap between the end of FY 2020 and the beginning of FY 2021, which could put the operation of summer meal programs in jeopardy. It would also lessen the burden on school districts and supervisory unions to submit two separate applications during this already very challenging time.

In addition, we respectfully recommend that Title 1 ranking be one determining factor in the disbursement of the full \$40 million. One reason for this recommendation is that, because they do not normally bus students, some of the lowest-income school districts (Winooski, Burlington, Rutland City, and others) suffered some of the greatest losses in their school meal programs since March, and may need extra funds to improve meal delivery systems should school closures be required in FY 21, or should social distancing require alternating having some students at school and some at home.

If it would be useful to the Committee, I am available to provide testimony tomorrow morning.

The Food Security Coalition is deeply grateful for your efforts on behalf of Vermont schools and Vermont families. Please let us know if you require any additional data and we will do our best to provide it.

Best regards,

Anore

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**Anore Horton** | Executive Director

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**Hunger Free Vermont** | 38 Eastwood Drive | Suite # 100 | South Burlington, VT | 05403

**802.231.1293** | DIRECT LINE

**802.865.0255** | HFVT MAIN LINE