

February 12th, 2020

Dear Ms. Hooper,

I had the pleasure of meeting you when you came to a legislative breakfast at Capstone Community Action this past November. I came to the event and spoke about my dog grooming business, A Cut Above the Rest.

I am writing this email in hopes that the state of Vermont will reinstate their funding for the Statewide Micro Business Development and Vermont Matched Savings Account programs. I have personally taken advantage of these programs and unbiased financial coaching with Elizabeth Scharf from Capstone Community Action over the last 6 years.

Back in 2012 I was fortunate enough to go to college but shortly after became pregnant. As a single mom I found it difficult to pursue my dreams and accomplish much more than my daily tasks. I was on Reach Up when I began working with Capstone who offered financial empowerment classes that helped me learn how to budget, raise my credit score, open up a savings account and more, all knowledge that I never had prior. I would honestly say that the financial empowerment classes were the beginning of what motivated me to eventually open up my own business. If someone would have told me that I would someday become a self-employed dog groomer then I would have not believed them. I was even fortunate enough to groom Phil Scott's golden Tucker!

I am now enrolled in the Vermont Matched savings program, using the money toward my dog grooming business. In the beginning stages of putting my money into the IDA account it was slow. It felt like I was making baby steps because I only deposited a small amount of money at a time. Once I reached my halfway point which was \$500, it became clear to me that I could save so I planned ahead more and kept saving more. It was a learning process that's helped me where I can now save to purchase a home someday.

I truly believe that Capstone gave me the skills and knowledge I needed to accomplish my goal of becoming a financially self-sufficient business owner and contributing member of society. Thank you for past support of these programs that are so valuable to our community and continuing to support them in the future.

Sincerely,

Nermina Beslagic
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