

## Community-Based Public Hearings on the Governor's Recommended FY 2021 State Budget

I am the Director of our Economic Development programs at Southeastern Vermont Community Action. I was dismayed to hear that two of our programs are not in the Governor's budget for the next fiscal year. Both our Micro Business and Vermont Matched Savings (IDA) programs are geared towards low income individuals who oftentimes have multiple barriers.

We are unique in that these programs are embedded within a community action agency that offers services to help meet some basic needs and, by doing so, individuals are better able to move forward. In addition, we work very closely with many other agencies including Vermont Adult Learning / Economic Services Division, Department of Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Vermont Matched Savings program helps to educate low income Vermonters on the importance of saving on a regular basis. After attending 7 financial fitness classes, we match their savings and they are eligible to use funds for home repair or first home purchase, post-secondary educational expenses, starting a business, car purchase or repair.

The Micro Business program helps individuals who either have a business or want to start a business. We help to walk them through the business planning process. Some of our most successful clients have gone through the Vermont Matched Savings program prior to signing up with Micro Business. These two programs have a symbiotic relationship with each other that contribute to our holistic approach in working with our clients.

Both of these programs significantly help in moving low-income Vermonters out of poverty towards self-sufficiency. They are not Band-Aids, they are not hand-outs...they offer a hand up. Please reinstate funding to these valuable programs.

Denise Mason, Director, Economic Development Programs  
Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)  
802-722-4575 ext. 150  
dmason@sevca.org