

Senate Education Committee Testimony
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Senate Education Committee Members,

I am so grateful to share my opinions on the many benefits of farm to school education with you. Farm to school education is truly integral to our communities and benefits us all in the following ways:

Engaging instruction

The educational value of farm to school is manifold. In order to prepare our students to become the critical thinkers and involved citizens we need them to be, it is important that we equip them with opportunities to engage in hands-on learning, real life problem-solving and the ability to form connections between their classroom and the world outdoors. At Shrewsbury Mountain School, farm to school education supports our commitment to education for sustainability, which we define as social, economic and environmental sustainability. Most importantly, students are truly excited when math, science and global citizenship come alive as they dig in the dirt or mix herbs together. The coaching we receive as a part of the farm to school grant allows our small school to engage in this work in a way that is both challenging and sustainable, as coaches are able to use years of direct experience navigating systems to teach us how to do the same for the benefit of our students.

Community connections

As we work to help students develop into thoughtful citizens, we believe it is important to help them understand where they live. Farm to school education helps us to form and maintain stronger connections within our community. These connections are especially integral to historically-marginalized students, as school-based interactions may provide important contacts and mentors and may expose students to new ideas and passions.

Supporting our local economy

We know that it truly does take a village, and by economically and socially supporting the very villages where we are raising our children, we are able to provide a symbiotic and positive relationship between our young people and our communities. When we talk about how to ensure our rural towns are sustainable, a key piece of this is supporting our local economy. When schools and educators are empowered to do this, we help to support our neighbors and the parents of our students.

Healthy eating

Farm to school education provides opportunities to help our students and families make healthy and informed choices. Students are much more likely to try new foods, specifically fruits and vegetables, when they have helped to grow or prepare these foods. Enjoying food is a social event and students are excited to try dishes like sauerkraut or beet hummus when they

are taste-testing with friends. Instilling a love of healthy foods and an understanding of where food comes from helps us prepare students to become happy, healthy community members and has long-lasting benefits to our state.

Farm to school education is a meaningful and impactful way to connect Vermont students to the past and ready them for the future. Please support the expansion of the farm to school program to allow access to more schools and local purchasing incentives to help educators support local farmers and our students' health. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.