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STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
AND FORESTRY

March 8, 2022

Mary Hooper
House Committee on Appropriations

Dear Rep. Hooper and Committee Members:

The House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry would like to amend its letter of recommendation to the Appropriations Committee regarding its budget priorities. We wish to add our support for the money allocated in the Governor's budget to the Payment for Ecosystems Services and Soil Health Working Group to fund their ongoing work and proposed pilot project.

While we appreciate the Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife weighing in on Payment For Ecosystem Services, we respectfully disagree with their assessment that the allocation is premature.

Our committee has taken a great deal of testimony and feel confident that the money will be spent in a beneficial way. We feel certain that the working group has done its due diligence and now is the time to adequately fund their pilot project.

We've taken additional testimony from Ryan Patch, Agriculture, Climate, and Land Use Policy Manager for the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets, and feel certain that enough work has been done and enough enthusiasm has been generated in the agricultural community that without the additional money this important program would lose momentum.

We are also convinced that many of the concerns voiced in the recommendation from the Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife have been considered and positively addressed by the Payment for Ecosystems Services and Soil Health Working Group.

The Committee on Agriculture and Forestry was encouraged by the inclusion of \$1 million for this effort in the Governor's Budget Proposal. We feel that this is taking important strides towards our climate mitigation and resilience goals. In fact, if there is additional one-time money the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry would encourage investing an additional \$500,000 for the Payment for Ecosystem Services Pilot Program. We conclude from testimony we have taken that this money will be used effectively to protect our state's water and soil resources.

We're forwarding to Rep. Tristan Toleno further information from Ryan Patch, and encourage the Committee on Appropriations to have Ryan Patch in to provide additional testimony on the funding of the Payment for Ecosystems Services and Soil Health Working Group.

We value the contributions made by farmers who are using soil health practices, and believe farmers should be compensated for the work they do that advances climate mitigation and resilience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn Partridge".

Carolyn Partridge, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry