

April 7, 2022

**Senate Appropriations Committee - via email**

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Senator Becca Balint	<a href="mailto:bbalint@leg.state.vt.us">bbalint@leg.state.vt.us</a>

Dear Senators:

I write this letter in support of additional funding for the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program as recommended by the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs. Investing \$50 million dollars in this program will grow our statewide food system, and especially help producers in rural areas of Vermont who continue to needs our help following the pandemic.

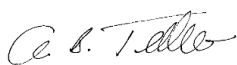
A recent report of the *Governor's Future of Vermont Agriculture Commission* highlighted the need to establish a strategic infrastructure grant program. The goal of this recommendation is to prioritize and invest in storage, distribution and other infrastructure needed to increase producers' access to distribution networks and out of state markets. This recommendation would also direct investments in the meat processing and waste industry.

The report also found that, "a lack of scale and sector appropriate infrastructure is the most critical barrier preventing agricultural entrepreneurs from reaching more consumers, growing businesses across a wide range of industry subsectors and scaling up to attract and retain new employees." The CIG program and additional funding proposal aligns nicely with the Commission's recommendation and report and would give producers access to the capital needed to complete system-strengthening and regionally transformational capital projects. Attached is the full report and a series of recommendations that support many of the State's priorities of supporting our rural economy, while growing more of our own food to feed Vermonters.

We know you face many difficult choices as you craft your budget, and we are appreciative of all the support you have given to our farmers, producers, and small companies. The CIG program is worthy of additional investments because it will continue to help those recover from pandemic-related loss and harm, while supporting Vermonters who want to buy more local food.

Thanks for considering.

Sincerely,



Anson Tebbetts, Secretary

