

Dear Representative Sheldon and the Environment and Energy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify with your committee last week. We know you have a very full docket and appreciate the time provided. Below is a recap of what we discussed during our testimony, highlighting why our programs continue to be critically important for Vermont and Vermonters!

Since 2021, our programs and participants have:

- **Served over 1300 participants**, engaging them in **9,550 weeks of training and service**.
- Earned **over 550 industry-recognized credentials** including high value construction trade certifications in carpentry, weatherization, and HVAC, as well as OSHA-10, logging, and college credit.
- Provided over **\$3.84 million dollars in wages and stipends** to participants as they complete high-priority service projects in climate mitigation and resilience, affordable and accessible housing, food security, outdoor recreation, and education
- Strengthened our economy by working with **over 370 Vermont employers** in the conservation and building trade sectors who have urgent need for skilled workers.

Unfortunately, SLE was not supported in the Governor's FY25 budget proposal. We had requested \$2.37 million to continue this work. This is the same level of funding we received last year, adjusted for 3% inflation.

With three years of proven outcomes, we now aim to extend our reach to more communities, enhance participant enrollment, expand our curriculum to new trainings, diversify the credentials offered, and continue to facilitate seamless connections between our graduates and prospective employers. Continued funding is essential.

In addition to the data above, we also know that our efforts contribute to the individual success of our participants – Vermonters often overlooked by other programs – and meet critical employer needs. We hear this first hand not only from our students, but from our employer partners.

***"Our Trailblazer (from VWW) apprentice is a great addition to our work group. I am so happy to be a part of what I see as a shift to more inclusion finally in our trade." - Silver Maple Construction, New Haven VT***

***"My time with the Pro Build crew gave me a clearer picture of what kind of career path I want to follow. My carpentry experience at VYCC led to what I am doing now. It was like taking two semesters of school in carpentry. The emphasis on learning meant that I could get a feel for every part of the building process and enter the workforce as a not-so-green carpenter. I'm using what I learned with the Pro Build crew every day." - SLE/VYCC Pro Build Crew Member***

We understand the budget is tight this year. We also know that Vermont needs flexible, accessible, and effective workforce training programs that reach all corners of the state. We cannot solve the housing and environmental problems we face without skilled workers. We will

not reach our climate goals without skilled workers. And, Vermont businesses will not thrive without a well-trained workforce.

Serve Learn Earn continues to be a smart investment that can build state revenues and reduce reliance of public assistance. We hope that you will continue to support Serve Learn Earn and include a recommendation of a \$2.37M appropriation in your budget letter to the House Appropriations Committee. Your support is instrumental in ensuring the continued success of Serve Learn Earn and the prosperity of Vermonters and Vermont's economy.

Thank you for considering this request and for the time in committee last week. We have attached our 2022-2023 report that conveys the impact Serve Learn Earn is having in Vermont.

With gratitude,  
Kate

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