



-Memorandum-

To: House and Senate Committee on Appropriations

Fr: Kayla Strom, Farm to School Coordinator at the Northeast Organic Farming Association of VT

Re: FY 25 Budget Hearing

Da: February 20, 2024

For the record, my name is Kayla Strom, I'm a resident of Richmond, Vermont and I am the Farm to School Coordinator at the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT). I'm here today representing the Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network, a statewide Network providing leadership, coordination, and advocacy for farm to school efforts in Vermont.

We are asking you to support the Governor's budget proposal for both the Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood grant program and the Local Foods Incentive for schools with level funded, base appropriations of \$500,000 each.

My role as NOFA-VT's farm to school coordinator is centered around supporting the increase of local foods in schools and early childhood programs and making sure these institutional markets work for our Vermont farmers as well. Aligned with the state's local purchasing goals, the Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood Network has the goal of reaching 30% local purchasing by 2030. To reach our shared goal, we need to make local foods affordable, easy to procure and available for schools while creating market opportunities for Vermont farms to thrive. The combination of the Farm to School Grants Program and the Local Foods Incentive work to integrate food access with local food purchasing, and agriculture and food education. These programs provide financial and technical support to schools to integrate Farm to School.

When we invest in farm to school and early childhood, we invest in our students, our local economies, and our rural communities.

Again, we are looking for your support of level, base funding for both the Local Purchasing Incentive and the Farm to School & Early Childhood grants program at \$500,000 each to support Vermont farmers and Vermont children.

Thank you,
Kayla Strom