

Hello, I'm Olivia Stewart,

And I'm Yvonne Miceler.

We appreciate your time, allowing us to testify today.

We are seniors at Champlain Valley Union High School, and we have been leading our Farm to School program for 4 years. Through Farm to School, not only have we been able to connect with our peers and build community, but we have also been able to make an active difference in food security and environmental initiatives in our towns

We are here to encourage you to base fund the Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant Program, and the Local Food Incentive Programs. Each at \$500,000, because these programs have allowed us to connect with our community and accomplish our various social and environmental goals.

Farm to school has provided us with a close-knit group of students we can depend on and turn to for anything. In fact, it was through Farm to School that we met. Freshman year was all about trying new things, but I hadn't quite found my place at the school yet. Then Yvonne found a club called Farm to School, and even though we barely knew each other, I said yes. Joining the Farm to School club has forever changed my life for the better. Through the program, I have met some of my best friends and learned how to be more confident and vocal about issues I care about. Throughout the week, my friends and I would brainstorm solutions to environmental issues, food insecurity, and anything else we learned about. And throughout the years, farm to school became our outlet to help with these problems. We have done gleaning and worked at farm stands to help with food insecurity. We have attended the NOFA-VT conference to help educate younger generations on the importance of fresh produce and the environment. We have been able to work on a farm with both plants and animals to understand ecosystem and agricultural practices, and we have both attended and planned FEAST which stands for Food Education and Sustainable Thinking. This allowed us to organize a day for 75 high school students, running workshops for each other to educate their peers on sustainable practices and solutions, while also raising awareness of food, farming, and environmental problems.

Personally, I have experienced first hand what it feels like to be helpless as there are so many issues around food insecurity and the environment. Hearing all of the problems can get really overwhelming. That is why having an outlet like the farm to school club can be so important because I feel like I am able to make a difference and have a community which understands my frustration and will help me to come up with solutions that we can do to help solve these issues.

We don't know what our future's hold yet, but next year we will be in college, and both be working with the environment. These experiences we have had in our Farm to School club will definitely be carried with us and may determine our direction. It has shaped who we are.

Once again, we ask that you support the Farm to School & Early Childhood Program and the Local Foods Incentive Program each with level-funded appropriation of 5 hundred thousand dollars because these programs have helped us so much and we want them to be able to continue to help others.

Thank you to all of the committees for listening to our story, and we would like to answer any questions if you have them.