

Hi, I am Pat Siergiey, I work at Capstone Community Action in Barre. Capstone sponsors the Child and Adult Food program; I am the Program Coordinator, and I have been with Capstone for over 26 years.

Please appropriate \$182,000 to the Agency of Education to distribute among the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sponsor organizations as an incentive to participate as a sponsor of the CACFP for Family Child Care Home providers.

Being a sponsor comes with many challenges, when I started at Capstone there were seven sponsors supporting the childcare providers and now, we are down to three. On October 1st of last year, we took over Franklin and Grand Isle Counties because the sponsor in St Albans did not renew their application with the Agency of Education because of the burden of supporting a program when there's not enough admin money to support it. When asked if I would take over the new area my first thought was why I would consider doing that because we cannot afford the financial burden. What changed my mind was when I realized that there was no one else and how important this program is. Providers need this program because it ensures that children in childcare receive nutritious meals and snacks, contributing to their healthy growth and development and helping establish positive eating habits early in life. The program provides access to healthy food for children who may not otherwise receive it, especially those from low-income rural families.

We have the largest service area visiting providers in nine counties. We currently have around 130 childcare providers enrolled with one full-time staff person and a part-time staff working 25 hours per week. We are working on hiring another staff person to help with visiting the new counties we acquired, but the fiscal year ending in September 2024 left us with a deficit of over \$25,000.

Please appropriate \$182,000 to the Agency of Education to distribute among the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sponsor organizations as an incentive to participate as a sponsor of the CACFP for Family Child Care Home providers.

Thank You

(Testimony was not done using Capstone Community Action time)

This institute is an equal opportunity provider.