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Thank you for your attention. My name is Aprille Soons Palmer and I live in South Hero. I am the manager of the Champlain Islands Farmers Markets and I am also on the board of the Vermont Farmers Market Association. In both capacities, I work closely with NOFA-VT and can attest that their work is essential for sustaining thriving farmers and healthy communities.

I am here today to support NOFA-VT's request for \$500,000 in base funding to Strengthen Vermont Farm Viability and Address Food Security by sustaining two proven programs: Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share.

I manage two weekly farmers markets throughout the growing season in South Hero and Grand Isle. Every market, we have a number of customers who come to my table to utilize their SNAP/EBT cards. The Crop Cash program allows them to match their first \$20 in benefits with Crop Cash coupons to spend on local fresh fruits and vegetables from our farmers. These coupons go a long way to stretch the tight budgets of those families who are most in need of food assistance. They also allow our hardworking farmers to be paid fairly for the literal fruits of their labor.

The Crop Cash program encourages our SNAP customers to shop locally at the farmers market and increases accessibility to fresh, nutritious food. In 2023, the Crop Cash (Plus) pilot program allowed customers to access not only fresh produce with their coupons, but also local eggs, meat, honey, canned goods, pasta, and bread. This variety was hugely appreciated by our customers and led to increased sales overall for many of our vendors.

These programs have been instrumental in helping connect healthy locally farmed food to families and folks who most need it and to spread the idea that farmers markets and fresh food are for everyone. They also help strengthen our Vermont economy by encouraging folks to spend their dollars locally.

To reiterate, I am here to support NOFA-VT's request for \$500,000 in base funding to Strengthen Vermont Farm Viability and Address Food Security by sustaining two proven programs: Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share.

Thank you for your time.