

Good afternoon,

My name is Keely Agan and I am the Early Childhood Nutrition Manager at Hunger Free Vermont. I have lived in Vermont for my entire life, going to grade school in Milton, VT and graduating from the University of Vermont with a B.S. in Dietetics and Nutrition and Food Science.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the committees about appropriating funds to the Child and Adult Care Food Program, or CACFP, sponsor organizations to support Family Child Care Home (FCCH) programs. These are small child care programs that individuals operate in their homes. FCCH programs are an important part of Vermont's child care capacity, especially in rural Vermont. We are asking the House Education Committee to include this request in your budget adjustment memo. Please ensure that FCCH programs can provide meals and snacks using federal funding by appropriating \$182,000 as an incentive for CACFP sponsor organizations.

The CACFP is the most equitable way to provide nutritious meals and snacks in early childhood education settings because all children receive the same developmentally appropriate nutrition. When an early childhood education (ECE) program relies on families to pack meals and snacks, different families have different capacities and therefore some children may be accessing more nutritious meals than others, and therefore are better able to access learning. In order to participate in the CACFP, family child care homes **are required to work with a CACFP sponsor organization**. A CACFP sponsor organization is an organization- in Vermont typically an organization like a Community Action Organization or a Parent Child Center- who provides administrative support for the CACFP. Without CACFP sponsor organizations, family child care homes, who serve over 3,500 VT children, would not be eligible to serve nutritious meals and snacks through the CACFP. In recent years the number of CACFP sponsoring organizations has declined- several organizations have recently dropped the program because the financial and capacity burden of being a CACFP sponsor organization became too much for their organizations to handle. The three CACFP sponsor organizations in Vermont are BROCC Community Action Agency, Capstone Community Action, and the Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development. These 3 sponsoring organizations are responsible for administering the CACFP for FCCH programs across the entire state, and at this time, the administrative payments that CACFP sponsoring organizations receive do not adequately cover the cost of being a sponsoring organization. On top of administrative funding challenges, now the CACFP sponsor organizations are struggling to manage capacity as they have to physically cover larger portions of the state - sponsors must visit participating FCCH programs several times a year as per the federal guidelines of the child nutrition program, making this capacity challenge even more difficult.

Thank you again for your consideration of our request to appropriate \$182,000 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 FCCH programs. Without CACFP sponsors, many children in VT would not be able to access nutrition in their early childhood education programs. You can have the most qualified program directors, but if children are showing up hungry or not showing up because they are hungry, they are not able to access

learning and development. Please support this important program that helps small home-based family child care programs ensure that children have access to nutritious meals.