

**Alison Calderara, Executive Director
Capstone Community Action**

As the Executive Director of Capstone Community Action, I am a member of the Vermont Community Action Partnership (VCAP). I am writing on behalf of the five community action agencies comprising VCAP to ask the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to support our request for \$1,150,000 to sustain and expand our Financial Capabilities services.

Community Action Agencies are Vermont's most powerful anti-poverty strategists. Our financial capabilities programming are highly effective **anti-poverty strategies** because they build **long-term capacity**, not just short-term relief. Our request includes three programs which are tightly coordinated to provide a total continuum of service.

Microbusiness development (+\$500k) creates self-employment opportunities for low-income Vermonters facing barriers to traditional small business development routes. Even modest microbusiness revenues can significantly improve financial stability for low-income households, reduce reliance on public benefits and bring higher household earnings. **In 2025, 646 Vermonters participated in micro business and development start up classes through a VCAP partner.**

Financial coaching provides one-on-one support (+\$500k) to help participants build workable budgets, repair credit, reduce debt, increase savings, and plan for long-term goals. Coaching is ongoing, practical, and customized to lead to behavior change that persists long after the program ends. **In 2025, 798 Individuals received coaching to build assets and increase financial skills.**

The VITA volunteer driven tax assistance program (+150k) is the final piece to the full continuum of services. For all clients of our programs, tax assistance provides refunds, reduces tax burdens and leverages available tax credits. **In 2025, 5170 returns were filed resulting in \$7,798,000 in refunds and credits to Vermonters, money that goes back into the local economy.**

We have submitted testimony and documentation of on-line requests from CVOEO and Capstone show that demand continues to grow. The Vermont Community Action Network is ready to expand its reach in Financial Coaching and Counseling, which directly supports low- and moderate-income Vermont families and aspiring entrepreneurs, as well as in Micro Business Development services that provide practical, one-on-one business guidance and education to self-employed Vermonters.

Please support this critical investment of \$1,150,000 to meet this demand and to ensure more Vermonters can live and thrive in an increasingly expensive state.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alison Calderara, Executive Director