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FY2027 Budget Public Comment

February 12, 2026

Good afternoon,

My name is Autumn Moen, I live in Burlington, and I am the Legislative Policy Lead at Hunger Free Vermont.

Thank you, Chairs and committee members, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of our request for an appropriation of \$182,000 as an incentive for Child and Adult Care Food Program sponsor organizations.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program, or '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. In order to participate in the CACFP, Family Child Care Home programs **are required to work with a CACFP sponsor organization**. This means that without CACFP sponsor organizations, many children in VT would not be able to access nutrition in their early childhood education programs. In recent years the number of CACFP sponsoring organizations has declined because the financial and capacity burden of being a CACFP sponsor organization became too much. We now have just 3 CACFP sponsor organizations in Vermont: 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 federal administrative payments that CACFP sponsoring organizations receive do not adequately cover the cost of being a sponsoring organization.

In FY2026, the legislature appropriated \$150,000 as an incentive for sponsoring organizations of the CACFP – an investment that has not only ensured that all three current sponsoring organizations can continue to operate the CACFP, but even led to an inquiry from a 4th organization into becoming a sponsoring organization. With continued investment in these sponsoring organizations, we can expand our state's capacity to offer the CACFP for Family Child Care Homes and get nutritious meals and snacks to more Vermont children.

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. Please support this important initiative that will help more small, home-based family child care home programs ensure that children have access to nutritious meals.