



February 25, 2026

Representative Robin Scheu  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Chair Scheu and Members of House Appropriations,

We are writing to request your support for Serve Learn Earn (SLE) funding based on recent testimony in three House committees. Over the past month we have spent time in House Commerce and Economic Development, House Environment, and House Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Resilience talking about the workforce benefits of the SLE program. All three committees have recommended increasing the level of funding for the Serve Learn Earn program in their budget letters to your committee. The specific recommendations are as follows:

**House Commerce and Economic Development** – Chair Marcotte and committee members recommended increasing the \$500,000 in the base funding to \$1,000,000. In addition to this high priority recommendation, the committee offered a strategy of utilizing the reversion dollars from the Department of Labor (DOL) for this request.

**House Environment** – Chair Sheldon and her committee had the same recommendation and noted that this would restore the program to 50% of the funding that it was provided in SFY25.

**House Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Resilience** – Chair Durfee and committee were also supportive and deferred to House Commerce on the specific amount.

We are grateful for, and encouraged by, these recommendations.

We are also appreciative of the time you took last year to see Serve Learn Earn programs in action, and to meet with program participants. You'll recall that we spent time with VYCC Crew Members who had enrolled in our timber frame pre-apprenticeship program. Serve Learn Earn partners were the first in Vermont to register pre-apprenticeships with the Vermont Department of Labor, including programs in timber framing, HVAC, electrical and plumbing. This summer, VYCC plans to expand the timber frame program and enroll 12 participants.

This initiative fits within the broader context and impact of SLE programs. Over the past five years, **2,162 participants, during 15,902 weeks of program engagement**, have built pathways to high-quality employment and affordable education. These Vermonters, 71% of which are 25 years and younger, are working to make Vermont better, stronger and more connected. Our participants gain skills and earn stipends while building back flooded communities, constructing affordable and accessible housing, repairing state parks, and improving habitat quality and flood resilience in every county in Vermont. With close partnership with trades employers, and with the clear guidelines and technical support from DOL, these programs are providing direct pathways into critical professions with high-wage, high-growth jobs. In this upcoming year, we are excited to sustain these programs and register additional training opportunities.

Since 2021, we have helped participants earn 859 industry recognized credentials, 181 certificates of value, and 75 college or professional development **credits as well as \$6.14 million dollars in wages and stipends.**

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Knowing the struggle the state faces in its workforce crisis, we are a reliable and cost-effective solution that helps hundreds of Vermonters every year develop skills needed to enter the workforce. As you build this year's fiscal budget, we are requesting that we increase the base budget funding recommended by Governor Scott. Specifically, we are seeking an additional \$500,000 for a total of \$1,000,000. We view this funding as a step towards greater impact and connectedness to state agencies and initiatives, as well as a critical step towards sustainability upon which our programmatic evolution and growth can occur.

This funding will allow us to maintain the current level of work and explore ways to increase our impact measured by placements into gainful employment, units of affordable housing built, fresh food grown and delivered to Vermonters in need, working lands supported, and more. We aspire to move into new communities, train folks for jobs in new sectors, enhance the support we provide participants, and plan new and more impactful service projects. This funding will also enable us to sustain philanthropic funding from partners eager to invest in state-backed workforce development programs focused on Vermont's rural communities. Over the next two years, we will bring more than \$1M into the state for these programs.

We know that you have many competing priorities as you develop your budget this year. With SLE's focus on building the workforce in clean energy, green building and trades, disaster recovery, forestry, agriculture workforce, and climate resiliency, we hope that you find alignment and synergy with your other priorities and needs.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this request further and to answer any questions you may have. We look forward to working with you as we continue to empower Vermonters with high quality training and service opportunities.

Thank you.

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