

Ian Rose

Food Service Director - Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union

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Thank you for your support of farm to school and early childhood in Vermont. For the record, my name is Ian Rose, I am the Food Service Director for Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union. Our food program serves 4 schools, providing nutritious meals for 1,100 students each day.

Please level fund Farm to School grants in the Agency of Agriculture's budget and the Local Food Incentive in the Agency of Education's budget at \$500,000 each for fiscal year 2027. This funding is included in the Governor's recommended budget. These two programs together ensure that all children receive high quality meals at school, and that we are supporting our agricultural families and businesses across the state.

Coming into my role as Food Service Director I wanted to make sure the value of local foods, the value which I hold dearly, was not lost amidst the financial challenges and realities of a school meals program. Over the last few years we have been able to increase our purchasing and usage of Vermont products from 15-25% of our total food purchases. This change has not only allowed us to provide our students and staff with additional nutritious food items, but also serves to support our local economy with essential revenue. Every dollar that our school spends on local food contributes \$1.60 to Vermont's economy, and across the state VT schools spend \$20M on food every year. Without Farm to School grants and Local Food Incentive programs we would not have the resources to provide the local food items which enhance our student's experience each and every day.

Currently I am taking part in the Farm to School Leadership Academy. This program was designed to bring together leaders from all over the country who are committed to transforming food systems in schools. Coming out of our recent gathering I felt a tremendous amount of gratitude

for the policies, systems, and values we have here in Vermont, values which are not universal across the entirety of our country. It is one thing to have farms producing beautiful food all around you. It's a whole different thing having systems in place to help those products find a way into our schools. The Farm to School grants and Local Food Incentive programs help schools to create the structures and build the partnerships we need to be able to bring farm fresh food into our schools and early childhood programs and offer it to our students on a daily basis. These programs are the physical demonstration of good policy in practice.

Thank you so much for your time here today, and for all the work you do every day to support our families and farmers. Thank you for listening and considering the real impacts of the Farm to School & Early Childhood program and the Local Foods Incentive. Level funding base appropriation of \$500,000 for Fiscal Year 2027, as well as the continuation of Universal School Meals through the Education Fund, means that we can continue this important work of nourishing children with foods grown and made right here in their own communities.

Thank you.

Ian Rose