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Public Hearing on the Governor's Recommended Fiscal Year 2027 Budget  
Re: Support \$500,000 in ongoing funding for NOFA Vermont's Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share programs

Hello and thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony.

I am here to ask you to support \$500,000 in FY2027 to support NOFA-VT's local food security programs - Crop Cash, Crop Cash Plus, and Farm Share.

I have lived in Vermont for 22 years and worked 19 of those as a part-time Library Director. Now that I am in my 70's and retired I only have Social Security and limited savings to pay the bills, including the ever increasing costs of living.

For decades I had a huge garden and what I didn't grow, I bought by the bushel at the local wholesale farmer's market and canned and preserved much of our food. However, neither my husband or myself can do the hard work involved with heart, lung, and knee problems anymore.

Being concerned both on the environmental, food safety and local economy fronts, I go to our local farmer's market weekly during the season and walk away disappointed in how little I can afford to buy. Last year, with the benefit of a grant thru the Farm Share program administered by NOFA, I was able to purchase a CSA share thru Birdsong Farm in Stockbridge, VT which provided us with most of our produce for the season.

Birdsong Farm as a CSA is not only providing fresh, local produce and eggs, but preserving one of the most picturesque farms in the area. CSAs provide young farmers with the economic security to plant, and hire the help they need knowing they have a community of investors in their farm.

Farm Share, Crop Cash, and Crop Cash Plus help support local producers and provide subsidies for the less financially fortunate among us to participate in local CSAs. I hope that the Appropriations Committee and the legislature as a whole will approve the requested amount of \$500,000 in FY27 for NOFA-VT's Local Food Security programs.