

February 19, 2026

To: The Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations

Re: Support for Bridges to Health request for \$500,000 appropriation for FY2027

Dear Legislators:

I am a retired family physician from Newport, Vermont who has volunteered with Bridges to Health since 2025. As such I have had the opportunity to work with one of the 8 regionally based Community Health Workers who covers the Northeast Kingdom and provides outreach efforts to the migrant community living and working on local farms.

I have seen her provide screening, education and referral support to this underserved community who support our agricultural and, more specifically, dairy economy. She provides counselling, serving as an interpreter and coordinator between the health care system and those who face obstacles in utilizing it because of time and language constraints. She facilitates medical and dental appointments and, more importantly, follows up to see that needed services have been received.

I have watched her interactions with both the farm workers and those who employ them and have seen mutual respect and appreciation for the work that she does from both. For both, she lessens time lost from work in securing needed health services in a timely fashion.

Bridges for Health is now undergoing a transition from their current home at the University of Vermont to a fiscal sponsorship with Vermont's Free and Referral Clinics. State funding of \$500,000 is necessary to sustain BTH as they make this transition.

I realize that appropriation requests face budgetary limits and priorities especially in view of rising health care costs. Bridges to Health by working with migrants and health care providers attempts to coordinate services in lower cost environments, namely physician and dental offices rather than in more expensive settings such as ERs or Urgent Care Centers. Our economy depends on a stable and healthy workforce. Our workforce needs health care that meets their needs. I believe Bridges to Health helps our migrant community access that health care and hope that you will approve this request.

Thank you for your consideration,

Denise A. Niemira, MD

Newport, VT

February 19, 2026

Vermont's House and Senate Committees on Appropriations

RE: \$500,000 for Bridges to Health in 2027

My name is Edith Hawksworth. I live in Enosburg Falls in Franklin County. As a retired nurse, I have been a volunteer driver for Bridges to Health for at least 5 years transporting farm workers from various countries to medical and dental appointments so that they may be healthy members of society as they work hard to provide the milk we drink and food we eat. They valiantly practice speaking English with me and refuse to correct my limited Spanish. In the last year I have offered to go marketing for one family of three too fearful of ICE to leave the farm on the Canadian border. It is a big shopping list because the woman cooks for at least 20 others on the weekends to give them a healthy taste of home. I transported her to prenatal care, the birth of a daughter by Caesarian section, subsequent hospitalization with pancreatitis, and treatment for diabetes. Her daughter is now 2 years old and up to date with all her shots. Several of her husband's siblings also work on the farm. I am impressed by the dedication of the people I have served and how faithfully they send money back to their homeland. Bridges to Health provides an essential networking service that most employers do not have the time, ability, or language skills to negotiate to keep their workforce healthy and productive. Bridges also actively supports its volunteers as challenges arise that require their expertise. Please consider the positive impact made by this organization and stabilize their funding. Thank you in advance for this consideration.

Edith Hawksworth

February 19, 2026

Subject: Support for Bridges to Health – 2027 Budget

Dear Members of Vermont's House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

My name is Jackie Reno, and I live in Burlington, Vermont. I have worked closely with Bridges to Health since 2023 through the Janet S. Munt Family Room parent child center, where I serve as Executive Director.

Please support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000 appropriation for FY2027.

Over the years, I have called on Bridges to Health hundreds of times to support families with young children, and they have consistently responded with the services and care those families needed. Whether helping parents navigate health coverage, connecting them to providers, or addressing urgent barriers to care, their Community Health Workers show up quickly and effectively. And we are just one organization in Vermont—there are many more communities across the state relying on their expertise and trusted relationships.

State funding of \$500,000 in FY2027 is needed to help sustain Bridges to Health as they make a necessary transition from their current home at the University of Vermont to a fiscal sponsorship with Vermont's Free & Referral Clinics. This transition is critical to ensuring continuity of services for the families who depend on them every day.

Thank you for considering this request and for your continued commitment to the health and well-being of Vermont families.

Jackie Reno

February 17, 2026
Janice M. Ketchum P.O. Box 71
490 Main Street North
Bakersfield VT. 05441

Dear Members of Vermont's House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

Please Support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000 appropriation for FY2027

My role with Bridges to Health has been transporting individuals and families to medical appointments. I have been doing this since 2019, which includes through Covid. I have transported migrants and their children to dental appointments in Burlington, Prenatal appointments, Illness and Injury appointments. I am retired and this is my most Meaningful Volunteer experience.

I transported a young expecting mom, and her spouse to most of their prenatal appointments and then after the birth made sure their infant and both mom and dad made it to the infants Well Child checks. Though I do not speak Spanish, through thumbs up hand gesture, pats on the shoulder, smiles, opening and closing doors and sitting in waiting rooms admiring their new baby, a relationship of trust and admiration was mutually built. After the baby's birth, mom and dad were so proud to share that they had chosen an American name for their baby, Melanie*.

Dad now has his license, still works on the farm, not long ago I saw mom, dad and Melanie* grocery shopping and they were so proud to share with Melanie* that I was the lady who used to drive them and Melanie* to medical appointments when she was a baby. These connections and memories are crucial to their integration in a community that values them as workers and family.

A few years ago, I transported a young migrant farm worker to a dental appointment in Burlington to have his wisdom teeth extracted without novacaine. With gauze filling his mouth he painstakingly pulled out his wallet and counted out more than \$300 in cash. No complaints, thanking the receptionist, spent the ride home spitting into kleenexes. Returning to the farm, he cleaned out the kleenex, thanked me for the ride and in good spirits planned on going to work for the night in less than 4 hours.

There have also been occasions when there has been an unexpected request to transport for an acute medical need. Having spent time working in the medical field I know how stress these situations can be for Families. The Grace and calm that the Families demonstrate at these times is an example of their courage and trust in the people who

transport them, in the Program's supervisors and workers that their needs are going to be met in a climate of mutual support, care so that their worries can be minimized.

I am honored to have the opportunity to transport and build connections within this program.

I want to Thank the Committee for considering my support of this, inclusive Community building request.

Janice M. Ketchum

February 19, 2026

Subject: Support for Bridges to Health – 2027 Budget

Dear Members of Vermont's House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

My name is Katharine Hutchinson and I live in St Albans, VT. I retired from Bellows Free Academy where I was Director of Guidance and Counseling Services. I am a volunteer with Bridges for Health and drive farm workers to their health appointments.

I am writing in support of the request of \$500,000 in FY 2027. As we all know, the dairy industry is essential to our economy and VT way of life. We are so fortunate to have farmworkers willing to do this critical work. Bridges for Health have been essential in maintaining the health and well-being of our workers. The workers need transportation, and assistance in navigating the health system. Bridges for Health is a crucial part of our health care system for our farms' survival and our workers' wellbeing.

Thank you for consideration. Please support this essential service.

Katharine Hutchinson
64 Fairfield Street
St Albans, VT 05478

February 19, 2026

Subject: Support for Bridges to Health – 2027 Budget

Dear Members of Vermont's House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

My name is Paul Capcara, I'm a Registered Nurse and Epidemiologist from Montpelier, Vermont. For the last several years I have volunteered with Bridges to Health. Having previously worked in community health around Vermont, the US, and internationally for over 30 years, I have been impressed by the critical role Bridges to Health plays in our state. By helping to ensure high-risk, underserved people living and working in the state can access primary and preventative care, Bridges to Health not only promotes the health of migrant workers, but all Vermonters who work and live alongside them. This is frequently demonstrated when VT State Agencies such as the Department of Health needs to reach migrant workers to help prevent and contain emerging public health threats such as TB, H5N1 influenza, measles, STIs, pertussis and other communicable diseases; they invariably turn to Bridges to Health for assistance due to their multicultural and language skills, as well as their extensive relationships in the community.

To effectively reach migrant workers for prevention and to ensure they receive timely healthcare to help prevent the transmission of diseases in Vermont, there is simply no feasible statewide option in Vermont other than Bridges to Health. Their work also has a disproportionate impact on reducing healthcare expenditures in the state - without support from their skilled staff and community health workers, most migrants forgo preventative and primary care until they are seriously ill and present in ER's for more costly and complicated care. Many migrant workers lack the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively navigate our increasingly complex, confusing, and expensive health care system so in the absence of assistance they present acutely ill at hospitals around the state. Bridges to Health also helps ensure they receive the follow-up treatment and care they need, including prescription medications, which is crucial in reducing the severity, duration, and transmissibility of illnesses. Please support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000 appropriation in FY2027.

Paul Capcara

2/14/26

Dear Members of the Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

I'm writing to voice strong support for the requested \$500,000 appropriation for Bridge to Health in the FY2027 budget.

I'm an active volunteer driver with Bridges to Health, traveling to farms throughout southwestern Vermont to take migrant farm workers and their family members, at my own expense, to medical appointments. I'm an important link between Jennifer, my Bridges to Health regional Community Health Worker, and health care providers in Rutland and Bennington. I can't begin to tell you how relieved and elated these workers and their families are when I show up. A friendly face. A reliable driver and escort. A mature individual who's had experience navigating our state's health care system. A protector, when or if needed.

With excessively long workdays, starting as early as 4am, farm workers face the challenge of getting time off and paying for medical care. Every dollar that Bridges to Health saves this population translates into money for food, housing, and other essential family needs. This vital program also helps take substantial financial burdens off Vermont's fragile health care system by utilizing office care in lieu of expensive ER visits. Our state needs a healthy, stable workforce, including those who do the dirty and dangerous work that few Vermonters want to do.

Support for our migrant farm workers is even more critical now that the Trump Administration has made changes to farmworker wages. According to the Vermont Department of Labor (as reported in VT Digger, 2/12/26), this federal change could lower the hourly wage by as much \$4/hour by 30% of Vermont farmer workers surveyed! Senator Joe Major, vice chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, told VT Digger that the legislature could look to complementary actions like investments in farmworker housing, **access to health care**, workforce protections, and programs stabilizing farm income "so that **the burden of federal policy changes doesn't fall entirely on workers or farmers.**" (VT Digger, 2/12/26)

As you know, these are dangerous times for immigrants, especially for Spanish-speaking laborers who are essential to keep Vermont's farms humming. If there ever was a time to step up in support of our neighbors, this is it. I strongly urge you to appropriate the sum of \$500,000 for Bridges to Health. This appropriation will be dollars well spent on behalf of all of us.

Respectfully,

Rosalie Gross Fox
Fulltime Vermont resident
Bridges to Health volunteer driver
PO Box 1011
Dorset, VT 05251

February 17, 2026

Subject: Support for Bridges to Health Community Health Worker Program – 2027 Budget

Dear Members of Vermont's House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

Statement in support of Bridges to Health

As a primary care physician who works at an FQHC in the NEK, I find Bridges to Health indispensable for providing care to the migrant worker population of our region. Without the critical support of our regional Community Health Worker (CHW) and the many volunteers that Bridges to Health coordinates to assist with transportation to and from medical appointments, I would not be able to meet this population's health care needs. The NEK CHW assists with outreach between visits, tracking down no-shows and overdue follow-ups. More critically, she and Bridges to Health build the foundation of trust that leads to this beleaguered population's willingness to receive medical and dental care when needed. They help to mitigate some of the many barriers to care they face, including linguistic, legal, financial, time/work-related, cultural, transportation, and paperwork burden related ones. Tonight, the NEK CHW and I head to Essex County to provide medical screenings for 15-20 H2A workers from Jamaica. At last year's screening, we identified and treated several cases of diabetes and high blood pressure, and assessed minor work-related injuries. Recently the NEK CHW convinced a migrant worker with diabetes to return for follow-up care, and we were able to get his diabetes back under control before any complications had set in. If we truly care about supporting Vermont's agricultural economy and all the members of our community, it is critical that we support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000 appropriation for FY 2027, to facilitate their necessary transition from UVM to a fiscal sponsorship with Vermont's Free and Referral Clinics.

Sarah Morgan, MD (family physician)

Hardwick Health Center

Northern Counties Health Care

Susan Hines Birgé
2642 Searles Road
N.Troy, Vermont 05859

February 19, 2026

Subject: Support for Bridges to Health Community Health Worker Program – 2027 Budget

Dear Members of Vermont's House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

For almost 10 years I have been involved with Bridges to Health.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, I was employed by Bridges to Health as a Health Outreach nurse. Because of my belief in this essential program, I have continued to work for Bridges to Health as a volunteer.

Please, for the health and wellness of our state, and for the communities within Vermont, please support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000. appropriation for FY2027.

Here is a brief account of an essential health outreach that occurred when I was working for Bridges to Health as a bilingual R.N.:

A local farmworker had been identified as having pre-diabetes. He was started on a medication to lower his blood sugar and given a glucometer. I went by the farm to check his blood sugar, review his diet, his medications, and the use of his glucometer. His blood sugar readings were back to normal levels. His elevated blood sugars had been discovered during a routine visit several weeks prior to his clinic visit, a visit that was coordinated by Bridges to Health.

As I was leaving, he asked if I could look at his roommate's hand. The day before, M's hand had gotten crushed by a cow that was being milked for the first time (a Holstein dairy cow weighs approximately 1200 pounds). M reported the injury to his supervisor. The supervisor told him to wash the injured hand, wrap it, cover it with a glove, and return to work.

By the time I saw the hand, it was grossly swollen, red, and hot to touch. M said he had been unable to sleep the night before. He was supposed to return to work early the next day.

Immediately, I called J, who at the time coordinated health outreach and clinic visits for Bridges to Health. J tried calling her contact at this farm, while I went in search of a farm owner or a manager. Within minutes, J called to tell me that the farm owners were at a meeting and would not be back for at least an hour. Unable to find anyone on the farm to bring M to the ER, I asked J to help organize an ER visit for M. J called the local ER with demographics and a brief description of the injury. When M and I arrived at the ER, he was pre-registered. He did not have to wait to be seen. He received X-rays, blood work, IV antibiotics, and wound care.

Dirty crush injuries to the hand are serious due to the high risk of infection. Untreated, or not treated immediately, this injury can result in loss of function and even amputation. At the very least, such an injury could result in weeks of IV antibiotic therapy and extensive wound care.

Without Bridges to Health, both these farmworkers would have experienced long-term health challenges. Because of the health outreach and support provided by Bridges to Health, these two individuals received both preventative and immediate care.

And this is just one vignette from one farm. Multiple this by the number of work settings in Vermont fueled by immigrants. Note that much of the essential work undertaken by this population is risky: 1200-pound cows, pitched roofs, hot kitchens, freezing barnyards, cluttered construction sites, farm machinery...Add to this crowded living conditions and 12- hour work days.

If not Bridges to Health, then who??? What entity will step in, with a pre- existing, dedicated group of volunteers, to support the health and wellness of these essential workers? And what happens if the answer is, "*No One*"?

\$500,000 is a minimal sum compared to the cost of funding "No One".
Respectfully,

Susan Hines Birgé, R.N. Dedicated
Volunteer Bridges to Health

Susanna Bowman
998 Lafont Rd,
Albany, VT 05875

February 15, 2026

Please Support Bridges to Health with \$500,000. appropriation for 2027.

There is a lot of attention being given to the horrific treatment of immigrants in US right now, but their situation has never been “a piece of cake”-- even in Vermont. Ten years ago, I started volunteering to do health transportation for BTH. I mostly met single guys who had been injured in on-farm accidents-- for which they might or might not receive help from a farm owner. BTH stepped in to get medical help for them. A few sought help from BTH for something like an abscessed tooth, but only when they could no longer ignore it. All the men I met endured long separations from their kids and families and lived in pretty harsh conditions. I recall guys at one farm telling me they paid \$75 each time to “a driver” to go buy food, since none of them had a car or a license. Recently BTH has coordinated efforts to deliver fresh vegetables on a weekly basis to many farm worker households, and also provides plants and advice for “those who want to grow their own”.

In recent years the immigrant worker population has changed visibly. Women are joining their partners, bringing their children and making families, which in turn provides more stability for farm owners. Children and their mothers are more likely to need and use health services, so the need for BTH has grown considerably. Transportation to meet basic needs is still a huge hurdle. A small child with a high fever needs timely medical help, so BTH Health Workers are on call, perhaps there is an extra trip to obtain medicine and a follow up visit, if a volunteer can not be found.

The role of BTH's fluently bilingual Community Health Workers is crucial. These 8 people keep track of the needs of most of Vermont's immigrant workers. They also maintain communication with clinic staff, doctors, hospitals, they schedule appointments, They are familiar with Insurance and other services including complex state regulatory issues, and of course all us volunteers.

In a time of governmental xenophobia let's show them *Vermont Is Different* –
Please support the appropriation requested by Bridges To Health. Thank You !

Sincerely,
Susanna Bowman

Kilborn Hill Farm

Thomas A. E. Moseley M. D.

Telephone (802) 673-2555

348 Hinman Settler Road
Newport, VT. 05855

Subject: Support for Bridges to Health – 2027 Budget

February 17, 2026

Dear Members of Vermont's House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

I am writing to you to support the request for a \$500,000 appropriation in FY2027 on behalf of Vermont's Free and Referral Clinics to continue the good work of the **Bridges to Health/Puentes a la Salud** program as they transition from a partnership with UVM Extension to a new program umbrella. I first became aware of the impressive work that Bridges to Health was doing in 2021 when I was working as a volunteer in Vermont Department of Health Covid clinics. Over the succeeding years to the present, I have met Bridges personnel as we did farmworker immunization clinics throughout Orleans County. I was particularly impressed by the work of our local Community Health Worker, M. whose personal contacts with our Spanish speaking farm workers made this program the success that it is. M. would encourage the workers, both young unmarried men and families, to overcome their fears and doubts about immunizations to show up for shots either in their homes or in milking parlors, barns, and other work places. It was clear to me that her strong relationships with the farm workers and families were the main reason we had the number of clients who accepted our Covid and other immunizations.

I quickly became aware of how vital M's services were when I dealt with the family of a farm worker hospitalized at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center with Q fever, a rare and serious illness contracted from exposure to animal waste in his job as a milker on a local dairy farm. The coordination of his care and follow up and support of his family were impressive. Similarly, at every clinic, I saw how she was facilitating educational support a 17-year-old from Guatemala who was hoping to become a farm manager, helping a pregnant farmworker obtain prenatal care, and many other examples.

Most of us, even health professionals, need assistance and advocacy to make our way through our fragmented, expensive, and confusing health care system. Bridges to Health provides an invaluable resource to help a vulnerable population receive the care they need, person by person and family by family. Please pass this appropriation to continue the good work that Bridges is doing. We appreciate the attention that the Appropriations Committee is giving this request.

Thomas A. E. Moseley, M.D. FAAP
Retired Pediatrician
Newport, Vermont

February 19, 2026

Re: Support statement for Bridges to Health Community Health Worker Program

From: James Collins East Albany, Vermont

This is to lend my support for the \$500,000 appropriations request for Vermont fiscal year 2027 state budget.

I volunteer with my wife for the Bridges to Health program, assisting immigrant farm workers in managing their medical and dental appointments, transporting workers to med sites and often translating between health officials and the farmworkers.

The Bridges to Health Community Health Worker team provides truly invaluable service to the farmworkers and in the process, support for Vermont dairy farming itself.

State funding of \$500,000 in FY 2027 is needed to help sustain BTH as they make a necessary transition from their current home at the University of Vermont to a fiscal sponsorship with Vermont's Free & Referral Clinics.

Please support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000 appropriation for FY2027 !

Thank you for seriously considering the BTH request.

Jim Collins

February 18, 2026

Dear Members of the Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

I am writing on behalf of the many individuals and families which have been positively impacted by the Bridges to Health Program, without which I am afraid they would not have accessed the necessary mental health care they so desperately needed. I am a mental health worker contracted with Bridges to Health to provide bi-lingual and bi-cultural mental health care services to migrant workers. Bridges to Health facilitates liaison to health care systems to empower individuals and families to get the care needed. Immigrant workers and their families face innumerable barriers including lack of knowledge of the Vermont health care system, long work hours, fear of lost wages for missed work, language differences, lack of transportation, and fear of health care costs. At a time with high food prices and housing shortages, a healthy and more stable workforce is key to ensuring the economic vitality of the agricultural, service and building trades sectors. Bridges to Health's Community Health Workers serve as liaisons, cultural brokers, health educators, advocates, and interpreters between individuals and community-based organizations to ensure access to care.

Additionally, as a mental health provider, I have appreciated their role in mitigating shame, fear, and stigma that so often accompanies people when they need mental health care the most. Bridges to Health does a remarkable job of easing the distress that is often present when individuals and families need these services.

The positive impact of Bridges to Health has a ripple effect touching individuals, family members, school, and work environments, and ultimately communities at large.

Please support Bridges to Health with a 500,000 appropriation for FY2027 so they can continue this important work.

Thank you for considering this request.

Respectfully submitted,

Doris Russell, Ph.D.

Psychologist-Doctorate

Wilmington, VT 05363

February 18, 2026
Camille Collins Lovell, MPH
998 Lafont Rd
Albany, VT 05820
ccollinslove@umass.edu

Dear Members of the Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

I am doctoral candidate at the School of Public Health and Health Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Over the past five years, my research has focused on the reproductive, maternal, and child health of immigrant female farmworkers in Vermont. I have also volunteered as a driver with Bridges to Health for six years, which has afforded me a thorough understanding of the health challenges faced by hired farmworkers in our rural communities. I am writing to ask you to support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000 appropriation for FY2027.

Through in-depth interviews with farmworker women across the state, I have documented the significant barriers they face in accessing family planning, prenatal care, postpartum services, and pediatric care. Women consistently describe challenges related to language, literacy, lack of transportation, long and inflexible work hours, fear of immigration enforcement, concerns about health care costs, and difficulty navigating an unfamiliar and complex system. Many arrive in Vermont without family or social support, are often the only Spanish speaking woman on the farm where they live. When they learn of Bridges to Health, it becomes a lifeline, providing information and referrals for other resources, including school enrollment, that make an enormous difference in the lives of these families.

As a volunteer driver, I have provided nearly a hundred rides to medical appointments and have spoken casually with many farmworkers—often in Spanish—about their experiences. Many have told me they would not have been able to access healthcare without Bridges to Health. Bridges to Health's regional coordinators and community health workers play a critical role as navigators, interpreters, educators, and trusted cultural brokers, helping farmworkers over the phone and in-person to complete paperwork, understand eligibility requirements, and manage the administrative steps necessary to obtain and maintain care. One woman I spoke to last year told me,

When I arrived here, I asked my husband... "How are we going to get the [contraception] shot? It's almost time again." He told me, "I'm going to talk to... the health promoter [at Bridges to Health]." She made the first appointment for us, filled out the paperwork, and gave our child a card so he could also go to the clinic.

Finally, the network of community-based volunteer drivers coordinated by Bridges to Health provides not only much needed transportation but fosters friendships and community integration at the local level that is an important social determinant of health for both farmworkers and volunteers. In a forthcoming publication, I argue that Bridges to Health is a model for other states to meet the needs of rural agricultural workers.

State funding of \$500,000 in FY2027 is needed to sustain Bridges to Health as it transitions from the University of Vermont to fiscal sponsorship with Vermont's Free & Referral Clinics. Without this support, immigrant farmworker families will face greater difficulty accessing time-sensitive reproductive, maternal, and child health services. Farmworkers are hardworking valued members of our communities and they deserve this support.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to improving health access for Vermont's communities.

Sincerely,



Camille Collins Lovell, MPH

Doctoral Candidate, Department of Health Promotion and Policy
University of Massachusetts Amherst, School of Public Health

February 19, 2026

To: The Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations

Re: Support for Bridges to Health request for \$500,000 appropriation for FY2027

Dear Legislators,

My name is Dr. Hillary Anderson. I am a pediatrician working in Burlington and a lifelong Vermonter. I've had the privilege of collaborating with Bridges to Health over the last 3 years as we've seen an increasing number of immigrant workers and their families living in the greater Burlington area.

The Community Health Workers (CHWs) with Bridges with Health have been essential in helping many of my pediatric patients access primary care services. **Please support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000 appropriation for FY2027.**

I've witnessed first-hand many situations in which the CHWs have been the difference maker in a child's ability to receive health care. Several years ago, a teenage patient presented to our clinic with concerning symptoms of significant weight loss and abdominal pain. Their CHW not only arranged transportation to our clinic, but also was able to support this patient obtaining a necessary CT scan and labs by helping them navigate from clinic to the hospital that same afternoon. The navigational supports within an increasingly complex system are paramount to reducing disparities.

There are countless times when I've leaned on our incredible CHW colleagues at Bridges to Health to help us connect with families - whether it is reminding them about an upcoming appointment or supporting them in understanding a test result and next steps. The dedication and professionalism that this team demonstrates is truly exceptional.

Bridges to Health CHWs are liaisons, advocates, health educators, and cultural brokers who are essential to providing the best possible care to our immigrant pediatric population.

Thank you for considering this request and please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide any additional information or examples.

With gratitude,

Hillary Anderson, MD, MPH



University
of Vermont

Larner College of Medicine

February 19, 2026

Re: FY27 – Bridges to Health Funding

Dear Senator Perchlik and the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Ben Clements and I am a family doctor with UVM Health and an Associate Professor of Family Medicine with UVM Larner College of Medicine. I am speaking today on behalf of Bridges to Health and in support of their **\$500,000** funding request for **fiscal year 2027**.

I have been a volunteer for Bridges to Health for six years. My work with Bridges to Health began in 2020 when Naomi, knowing migrant workers had little access to primary care or transportation to pharmacies, wanted to do everything possible to reduce respiratory illness on Vermont's farms, reached out to me in hopes of bringing flu and COVID vaccines directly to the farms. This work has taken me all over the state, and together we've given well over a thousand vaccines. We've given vaccines in homes, in trailers, in milking parlors and outside in snowstorms, all for folks with significant barriers accessing our state health system. Our work matured into doing health screenings on both farms and in community meeting places, screening for hypertension, diabetes, depression, substance use disorders, etc. I'm also one of a few volunteers who provide triage support to the Bridges to Health Team.

The folks that Bridges to Health serves are the backbone of our state. I've gotten to work with people who milk cows, pick strawberries, harvest squash, build homes, apply roofs and wash dishes. Our farms rely on them. Our construction industry relies on them. Our service industry relies on them. And they rely on Bridges to Health.

Naomi and her team of community health workers are trusted and culturally competent liaisons between migrant workers and our state health system. Our vaccine outreach has reduced the burden of influenza and COVID for these essential workers. Bridges to Health's administrative support is responsible for nearly all enrollments in the Immigrant Health Insurance Program. And, their outreach and triage work connects to Primary Care, avoiding unnecessary and expensive Emergency Rooms.

I understand this is another year of tight budgets and yet I firmly believe that an investment in Bridges to Health is wise, and one that will save our taxpayers money.

Please support their funding request.

Sincerely,

Ben Clements, MD
Associate Professor
Department of Family Medicine
University of Vermont Medical Center
University of Vermont, Larner College of Medicine