

Good afternoon. My name is Susan Grabowski. I live in Putney and serve as the School Nutrition Program Coordinator for the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union. My work sits at the intersection of food access, family stress, and children's readiness to learn. That is why I care about Bridges to Health.

I am here to ask you to please support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000 appropriation for FY2027.

In my role, I often see the strain families carry — navigating food insecurity, housing instability, and health challenges all at once. I am not a healthcare provider, but I see how difficult it can be for families to understand and access the systems meant to support them. When caregivers are overwhelmed by complex processes, long waitlists, or language barriers, children feel that stress too. Having trusted Community Health Workers who can help families navigate the health system, advocate for them, and connect them to resources is not a luxury — it is stabilizing infrastructure.

Bridges to Health's regionally based Community Health Workers provide navigational supports within an increasingly complex health system, serve as liaisons and advocates, and empower clients to make timely health decisions. Sustaining this work as they transition to fiscal sponsorship with Vermont's Free & Referral Clinics is essential to maintaining continuity for the communities they serve.

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Thank you for considering this request.