

Montpelier High School Testimonies in Support of Farm to School Funding

Feb 12, 2025 Statehouse

9:00- 10:00 Senate Agriculture Committee

- 1) Sam Bromley, Science Teacher
- 2) Brigitte Savard, World Language teacher
- 3) Chi-chi MacVicar- Ceckler, High School Senior

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- 1) Sam Bromley, Science Teacher

My name is Sam Bromley and I teach Science at Montpelier High School just steps from here. I work with students in a variety of ways through FTS initiatives including helping run our Cooking Lab which processes and creates delicious products from our gardens, greenhouses, chickens, and bees. I am here today to ask you to please support the Farm to School & Early Childhood program with level funding base appropriation of \$500,000 for Fiscal Year 2026. **Also**, please support the Local Food Incentive program for schools at \$500,000 level funding base appropriation.

I want to speak broadly about how FTS initiatives are making an impact in our school... Imagine stepping outside your classroom and harvesting fresh greens from our school garden, collecting eggs from our chickens, or watching bees hard at work in their hive. Picture a meal cooked in a wood-fired oven, made with ingredients grown right on our campus. This is what Farm to School looks like at Montpelier HS, and it's transforming the way we learn, eat, and connect with our Vermont landscape.

Our gardens and greenhouses provide hands-on learning opportunities—not just in agriculture, but in science, sustainability, culture, and responsibility. Raising chickens and tending to bees teach us about food systems, environmental stewardship, and the importance of pollinators. And our cooking lab? It's more than just a classroom—it's a place where we turn fresh ingredients into real meals that feed our community, fostering skills that will last a lifetime.

Our school hosts three Farm to School (FTS) focused community meals each year, each designed to foster connection, collaboration, and appreciation for local food systems. In the fall, we celebrate the *Fall Harvest Celebration*, where students participate in service-based workshops in the morning and come together in the afternoon to enjoy a meal made entirely from locally sourced ingredients. During the winter, we hold *Solon Soup*, a school-wide gathering where students share soup and bread as a

community. We intentionally prepare extra servings to donate to local food shelves, reinforcing our commitment to community engagement and support. To conclude the school year, we welcome the warm weather with a *Pizza for the People Celebration*, where students prepare and serve wood-fired pizzas from our earth oven for an audience of 400. Each of these meals is student-led in various capacities, from planning and testing recipes to preparing, cooking, and serving their peers. These experiences not only cultivate valuable skills but also reinforce the idea that food connects us—to one another, to local farmers, and to the land that nourishes us.

So I ask again for your to please support the Farm to School & Early Childhood program **and** the Local Foods Incentive each with a level funded base appropriation of \$500,000 for Fiscal Year 2026. Thank you for your time.

2) Brigitte Savard, World Language Teacher

Good Morning, my name is Brigitte Savard, and I teach French, Spanish, and an entrepreneurship class called La Bonne Crêpe at Montpelier High School. Today, I am here to urge you to support the Farm to School, Early Childhood, and Local Food Incentives programs by maintaining a level-funded base appropriation of \$500,000 for Fiscal Year 2026.

Four years ago, my French class needed a fundraiser to participate in an international exchange. A student suggested we sell crêpes at Capital City Farmer's Market. That summer, a small, motivated group of students and I brought this idea to life. We created a business plan and crafted a menu featuring local, seasonal ingredients. What began as a simple afterschool project evolved into something much bigger—an embodiment of what Farm to School means to me: an abundance of learning opportunities, and hands-on learning rooted in real-world experiences.

Today, La Bonne Crêpe is more than a fundraiser. It has grown into an accredited class where students dive into every aspect of running a small, local food business. We meet with chefs, restaurant owners, and our school's food service director to understand their work and apply those insights to our own. We explore ingredient sourcing, seasonality, and sustainable practices. Our menu is inspired by what's fresh at the market, and we work together to develop our collective voice as chefs and entrepreneurs.

As a teacher, what I find most rewarding about Farm to School work is the sense of connection and belonging it fosters. I've watched students become friends while spinning crêpes together. They get to know local farmers, trading crêpes for vegetables and maple cream. Parents come to the market to support us, and for many students, it's their first real work experience. For some, it's a chance to explore being a chef; for others, it's an opportunity to lead or collaborate. When local food becomes the centerpiece of our work, we find ourselves more grounded, more connected to the land, and more connected to each other.

I hope we'll get the chance to see you next fall at the Capital City Farmer's Market. Most importantly, I ask you to fully fund and support the Farm to School program, the Local Food Incentive program, and Early Childhood Education with a level-funded base appropriation of \$500,000 for Fiscal Year 2026. These programs are investments in education, community, and sustainability that yield immeasurable returns.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

3) Chi-Chi MacVicar-Ceckler, High School Senior

Hello. My name is Chi-Chi MacVicar-Ceckler and I am a high school senior at Montpelier High School. I've been a part of the high schools "Cooked" as well as "la bonne crepe" class where I have had the chance to learn about and work with foods grown either from our own backyard in our schools community garden and greenhouse or locally sourced farms around Vermont. I am here to ask you to please support the Farm to School & Early Childhood program with level funding base appropriation of \$500,000 for Fiscal Year 2026. **Also**, please support the Local Food Incentive program for schools at \$500,000 level funding base appropriation.

For me, The Farm to School & Early Childhood program has helped me build a strong connection between myself, my friends and my community with the food we eat, where it comes from, and who grows it. In the fall as a member of the Cooked class, I got to help organize the Fall Harvest Celebration, a day with schoolwide workshops in the morning followed by a schoolwide meal. The menu, hand selected by students and brought into execution in collaboration with students was sourced entirely from local ingredients. The process of collecting ingredients from our own backyard and preparing them into a meal for our whole school to enjoy was very empowering, helping me further understand the importance of sourcing food locally, the way it supports sustainability, small businesses, and fosters a strong community.

This initiative has helped me build a connection between myself and local farmers, something I've never truly appreciated before. As a part of *La Bonne Crepe*, I get the chance to make and sell crepes at the local farmers market. In preparation for opening, I got to walk around to vendors, buying ingredients for the crepes we'd make at that very same market. Not only was this a cool farm to food experience where I got to see exactly where my food came from, and what that food turned into but I also got a chance to talk to the farmers too. Getting ingredients like ripe strawberries and crisp lettuce in exchange for the crepes with the ingredients they poured their care into was a beautiful exchange of experiences. Seeing, feeling and tasting the joy they brought us and we brought them reminds me of the real people behind the food I eat, and how meaningful that is.

Please support the Farm to School & Early Childhood program and the Local Foods Incentive. Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions.

11:30 AM - 12:00 PM - House Education Committee

- 1) Sam Bromley, Science Teacher
 - 2) Loretta Seibert - High School Senior
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1) Sam Bromley, Science Teacher

(See above)

2) Loretta Seibert - High School Senior

Good morning committee,

My name is Loretta Seibert and I am a senior at Montpelier High School. I am here today to ask you to please support the Farm to School & Early Childhood program with level funding base appropriation of \$500,000 for Fiscal Year 2026, and to also ask you to support the Local Food Incentive program for schools at \$500,000 level funding base appropriation.

Farm to School initiatives make a large impact in our school. Bringing farmers, educators, and students together helps foster community connection and brings organic healthy food to the school. The Early Childhood program makes this food accessible to all.

In the larger school community, the Farm to School initiatives have brought everyone together in more ways than you can imagine. We have 3 whole school meals that are focused on sustainability and using what we've grown so nothing goes to waste. Not only that, but, students go out into the community and learn about the ways our food is grown, building connections and encouraging sustainable ecological practices.

In my personal experience, the greenhouses and gardens supported by the Farm to School program have had a positive impact on my education. In Spanish 4 we planted and harvested potatoes while learning about their role in the history and culture of Latin America. In AP Spanish, we used the corn from the fields to learn about and participate in the process of Nixtamalization to make tortillas.

This year in the new Spanish cooking class, La Cocina, we use the fresh vegetables from the garden to craft our various recipes and connect them to Latin American and Spanish cuisine.

Food tells a story. Every ingredient comes from somewhere, and the greenhouse, gardens, bee hives, and chicken coop are places for us to discover those stories. We learn how to plant and harvest fruits and vegetables, take care of chickens and use their eggs, and harvest honey. The various cooking classes at our school would not be possible without Farm to School programs. La Bonne Crepe, La Cocina, and Cooked all teach valuable, lifelong, culture, business, and culinary skills.

So, to close out, please support the Farm to School AND Early Childhood program with level funding base appropriation of \$500,000 for Fiscal Year 2026, as well as the Local Food Incentive program for schools at \$500,000 level funding base appropriation.

Thank you for your time.