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Testimony for 02/20.

Hi I am Miranda Dalton, from Hinesburg, I am the Waitsfield Farmers Market Manager a member of NOFAVT and VTFMA.

I am requesting to speak on \$500,000 in base funding to Strengthen Vermont Farm Viability and Address Food Security by sustaining two proven programs: Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share.

As a market manager, my job is to provide a diversity of food options for our community, while maintaining a healthy variety of vendors. We limit our field to only 3 vendors of one type. This means that we are limited to accepting 3 vegetable farmers and 3 fruit farmers. In the normal crop cash funding cycle this only allows 6 small Vermont businesses to support our Crop Cash using community members. During the 2023 test year of Crop Cash plus, this allowed the SNAP/EBT recipients to access things like meat, dairy, local fresh baked bread, forestry products like Maple Syrup, and value-added agricultural food products. Vendors accepting this new Crop Cash Plus rose from 6 to 20.

In tandem, we saw universal school lunches and P-EBT cards in 2023. This allowed community members of all socio-economics to access this program and see how the same dollar that feeds the family funds the farmer. Eliminating the stigma behind accessing food security benefits. In 2024, several families came back, realizing they qualified for SNAP benefits, and continued to use the program. We saw an increase in SNAP utilization of 341% comparing 2022 with 2024. We often think of Waitsfield as an affluent community, but many families struggle with food insecurity and some redemptions come from vendors themselves. Please consider the economic impact programs like Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share have on many Vermont families.