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February 10, 2026

Chair, Rep. Robin Scheu
Vice Chair, Rep. Martha Feltus
Members of the House Appropriations Committee

Vermont General Assembly
Montpelier, VT 05602

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

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of continued funding for the Bridges to Health Community Health Worker Program in the 2027 budget as it transitions away from UVM Extension.

Agri-Mark is a dairy cooperative owned by more than 400 farm families across the Northeast, including approximately 100 in Vermont. Since 1916, Agri-Mark has worked to support dairy farm families and the rural communities where they live and work.

Bridges to Health fills critical gaps in health care access and social service navigation for immigrant workers and their families—many of whom are employed in agriculture and food production and whose labor is indispensable to Vermont's economy. The program has received national recognition for its effectiveness and has built deep, trusted relationships across the state.

For Vermont's dairy farmers, Bridges to Health is often the only culturally competent, language-accessible connection between their employees and the care they need. Our farmer-owners consistently tell us that when a farmworker is sick, injured, pregnant, or in crisis, Bridges to Health is who they call. The program's presence helps farms deliver improved farmworker well-being, which in turn ensures smoother operations and enhanced animal care.

Farmers have shared concrete examples of the program's value:

- One Vermont farm hosts annual onsite vaccination clinics with support from Bridges to Health, filling a gap left when local pharmacies stopped offering onsite services. Spanish-speaking staff handle paperwork and appointment scheduling—work that farmers cannot easily manage amid labor shortages and tight margins.
- Another farm relied on Bridges to Health to support a worker's family during a premature birth. The program provided hospital interpretation, helped arrange NICU visits, and assisted with navigating complex medical and insurance paperwork during an already traumatic time.

The need continues to grow. In the past two years, Bridges to Health has seen a 87% increase in caseload, serving more than 1,450 individuals in 2025. Funding instability has placed the program at risk, creating uncertainty for the workers, families, and employers who rely on it.

On behalf of Agri-Mark and our Vermont dairy farm families, we respectfully urge the House Appropriations Committee to include full, ongoing funding for the Bridges to Health Community Health Worker Program in the 2027 budget. This investment supports immigrant workers, strengthens farm businesses, and protects the resilience of Vermont's rural

economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Catherine de Ronde
Vice President, Economics & Legislative Affairs
Agri-Mark

CC: David Lynn, CEO, Agri-Mark; Jed Davis, VP Sustainability & Strategic Engagement, Agri-Mark; Justin Johnson, Partner, MMR, LLC



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