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FY2027 Budget Written Testimony
NOFA-VT Local Food Security

Hello,

My name is Christina Bertorelli. I live in Huntington and am both an eater and a former farmer in the greater Burlington area. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

I am writing to ask you to please appropriate \$500,000 in FY2027 to support local food security programs - Crop Cash, Crop Cash Plus, and Farm Share. These three food security programs matter deeply to me as I believe food is one of the great equalizers.

In 2022, while working at the Old North End Farmers' Market, I saw firsthand how Crop Cash empowered people to choose their own food. Food that was fresh, local, seasonal, and nutritionally dense. There was dignity in that choice.

One Tuesday in September, I remember a young child eyeing a pint of ripe Sungold tomatoes. They studied the neat stacks of pints, ran back to their parent, then returned to the table. Back and forth they went, three times at least, drawn to those tomatoes. Finally, their parent walked over and used their Crop Cash to buy the pint, no hesitation.

I can still picture the look on that child's face when I handed the pint to them. So many kids would turn their noses up at tomatoes. But they were beaming. And how could they not be? Local, right-off-the-vine Sungolds are one of the sweetest, most delicious foods. They have a sweetness that is rarely captured by a conventional grocery store tomato and are an everyday fruit that can feel out of reach for many, especially in these hard economic times.

That moment has stayed with me over the past four years: The joy, the choice, and the simple power of good food in someone's hands. And it's part of something larger. A localized, circular system where the food that nourishes Vermonters also sustains the farmers who grow the food and steward the land. This is why I request that you please appropriate \$500,000 in FY2027 to support local food security programs - Crop Cash, Crop Cash Plus, and Farm Share. Thank you for your consideration.

Kind Regards,
Christina Bertorelli