



February 25, 2026

Senator Anne Watson  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Senator Watson and Members of the Natural Resources and Energy Committee,

We are writing to request your support for Serve Learn Earn (SLE) funding. With SLE's focus on building the workforce in clean energy, green building and trades, disaster recovery, forestry, agriculture workforce, and climate resiliency, we see real alignment and synergy with Vermont priorities.

Since 2021, we have helped **2,162 participants earn 859 industry recognized credentials, 181 certificates of value, and 75 college or professional development credits.** Our participants have earned over **\$6.14 million dollars in wages and stipends** during a combined **15,902 weeks of program engagement.** Serve Learn Earn is an accessible training opportunity that helps Vermonters build pathways to high-quality employment and affordable education.

Serve Learn Earn participants, 71% of which are 25 years and younger, are working to make Vermont communities stronger and more connected. Our participants gain skills and earn stipends while rebuilding flooded homes, constructing affordable and accessible housing, repairing state parks, and improving habitat quality and flood resilience in every county in Vermont. With close partnership with trades employers, and with the clear guidelines and technical support from DOL, these programs are providing direct pathways into critical professions with high-wage, high-growth jobs. In this upcoming year, we are excited to sustain these programs and register additional training opportunities.

Knowing the struggle the state faces in its workforce crisis, we are a reliable and cost-effective solution that helps hundreds of Vermonters every year develop skills needed to enter the workforce. As you build this year's fiscal budget, we are requesting an increase to the \$500,000 of base budget funding recommended by Governor Scott. Specifically, we are seeking an additional \$300,000 for a total of \$800,000 base budget funding. We are highly encouraged that the House Committee on Appropriations recommended support of Serve Learn Earn in the budget they have now sent to the Senate. We view this funding as a step towards greater impact and connectedness to state agencies and initiatives, as well as a critical step towards sustainability upon which our programmatic evolution and growth can occur.

This funding will allow us to maintain the current level of work and explore ways to increase our impact measured by placements into gainful employment, units of affordable housing built, fresh food grown and delivered to Vermonters in need, working lands supported, and more. We aspire to move into new communities, train folks for jobs in new sectors, enhance the support we provide participants, and plan new and more impactful service projects. This funding will also enable us to sustain philanthropic funding from partners eager to invest in state-backed workforce development programs focused on Vermont's rural communities.

We recognize that the legislature has many competing priorities as you develop this year's budget. We also believe firmly that continued investment in Serve Learn Earn is a smart strategy to address multiple Vermont needs and priorities. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this request further and to answer any questions you may have. We look forward to working with you as we continue to empower Vermonters with high quality training and service opportunities.

Thank you.

Breck Knauff, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Rhoni Basden, Vermont Works for Women

Tom Longstreth, ReSOURCE

Jamey Fidel, Audubon Vermont