

FTS 2021 Budget Public Hearing Testimony
February 8th, 2021
6-7pm

Vermont Senate and House Committees on Appropriations:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

My name is Maire Folan and I am the program manager at Green Mountain Farm to School in Newport.

We know that we need \$500,000 annually in the Farm to School and Early Childhood grants program.

For FY2022, I am asking to please FULLY FUND the Farm to School and Early Childhood grants program at the \$500,000 goal to support our children getting great nutrition and our farmers getting direct support through purchasing for school meals.

The grants program provides schools with funding, expertise, support, and dedicated time to develop and grow farm to school programming. As a grantee coach through the program, I can share this is a winning formula for success. The Newport Head Start Center, a current grantee, is planning to build a sensory and snacking garden space with grant funds this spring after an inspirational curriculum workshop with Shelburne Farms. They are working with NOFA-VT to think through implications for their meal program - namely how to utilize more whole-foods - from their garden and from a new partnership with local food hub, Farm Direct.

As this example illustrates, the grant program affects all aspects of the school and community - better nutrition for students, vital food and agriculture education, business for our farming community. No other program provides the same outcomes.

The demand for Farm to School funding continues to grow each year. We have been making great progress, but in order to continue, we must increase our investment until we reach our \$500,000/year goal.

Thank you for your time, service to our state, and consideration of this request.