

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We are writing you today to express our strong support for Green Mountain Farm-to-School's application to USDA's Local Food Promotion Program (CFDA 10.172) for its "Scaling up Rural Food Hubs: Growing Demand through Marketing Development" project. With this project, Green Mountain Farm-to-School will collaborate with Windham Farm and Food to increase sales through their respective existing food hubs, and to refine successful models for rural food hubs.

For the past ten years, Green Mountain Farm-to-School has successfully connected schools and residents to the products grown and raised on area farms. Its Green Mountain Farm Direct food hub project is an integral component of the organization's strategy to support area farms and provide locally grown nutritious food to residents of the Northeast Kingdom, Vermont's most rural and low-income area that has the highest rates of children living in poverty. Similarly, Food Connects' Windham Farm and Food hub helps promote the rural economy in southeast Vermont by building new markets for local food producers that provide fresh local food for area residents.

With the requested funding through USDA's Local Food Promotion Program, these two well-regarded organizations propose to strengthen their respective local food hub activities through comprehensive and coordinated marketing development plans. Through enhanced marketing, Green Mountain Farm Direct and Windham Farm and Food hope to reach new buyers and open new markets, which in turn will enhance opportunities and profitability for farmers, create new jobs in the rural economy, and increase the supply of locally grown healthy food in our communities.

Vermont has long been a national leader in the local food movement, and this new proposal from Green Mountain Farm Direct and Windham Farm and Food will help build on past successes by further strengthening local food networks. We appreciate you giving this application the serious consideration it deserves. If we can provide further evidence of our support, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator

BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



PETER WELCH
United States Congressman