

Stoni Tomson  
New Tradition Farm (Huntington)  
Submitted Public Comment on Federal Impacts

My name is Stoni Tomson, and I am a vegetable, fruit and nut farmer based in Huntington at New Tradition Farm. This is my farm's 5<sup>th</sup> season in production. I am also a member of NOFA-VT.

I'm writing to urge this committee to take bold action for the health of our communities in the face of the devastating federal cuts to Medicaid and ACA subsidies. The current threats to Medicaid and the Advanced Premium Tax Credit put both Vermont's agricultural economy and the health of our society as a whole at risk.

Like so many hardworking farmers and farmworkers who put nutritious food on our tables, I rely on Medicaid for healthcare. Most full-time farmers and farmworkers I know are either on Medicaid or take advantage of the Advanced Premium Tax Credit.

Decades of policy decisions have wrought a food system where large multinational food corporations are taking home enormous profits while churning out objectively gross food that is making us all sick and polluting the environment, while local, small-scale farmers (like me) and farmworkers producing healthy, nutrient-dense food in ecologically sound ways struggle to make a living. If we lose affordable healthcare, we may be one illness or injury away from financial disaster or closing our farms. That puts Vermont's beloved local farms and our state's entire agricultural economy in a very precarious position.

The same is true for our customers. If they lose affordable healthcare, get caught up in red tape and excessive paperwork, or are forced to pay exorbitant premiums to insurance companies, they have less money to spend supporting their local farmers, who incidentally are growing the nutrient-dense food that is so essential to preventative health.

My hope is that Vermont's lawmakers can begin to turn the tide of these sadistic, anti-health, anti-life policies and begin to create a system where all Vermonters have access to the medical care they need as well as fresh, local food.

It's a shame that Vermont never made good on our attempt to pass universal health care. We need to do better - for our farmers, our families, and the future of our state. I believe we can, as countries around the world with universal healthcare programs are living proof of it.