

FY2024 Budget - Juanita Wade

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Good evening. My name is Juanita Wade. I am a resident of New Haven and a volunteer for the Vermont Food Bank. Please address the ongoing needs of Vermonters facing food insecurity by establishing a base appropriation of \$3 million in the FY24 state budget for the Vermont Food Bank.

The Vermont Food Bank serves Vermont's most vulnerable populations. Volunteering in Addison and Rutland counties at the Foodbank's Veggie Van Go food distribution sites, I see that vulnerability and corresponding relief families feel when shares of fresh produce are loaded into their cars. Along the way, I have gotten the chance to see a child discovering that cherries have pits, grandparents sharing their favorite recipes, and high school students filling backpacks to deliver food to their families. The food bank provides quality food, much of it produced by Vermont farmers. A portion is gleaned from local farms, thanks to the generous donations of those farmers and the hard work of volunteers. While I have yet to see an Eat More Kale bumper sticker on any of the cars driving through the distribution sites, I know that with the coordinated efforts of the Food Bank and continued funding, more Vermonters will be able to enjoy kale and food security. And food security is key to a healthy, productive life.

I ask again, please address the ongoing needs of Vermonters facing food insecurity by establishing a base appropriation of \$3 million in the FY24 state budget for the Vermont Food Bank.