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Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today on behalf of food-insecure families in Rutland and Bennington Counties.

My name is Amy Scott, I live in Rutland, I am the food program manager at BROC Community Action. BROC is a partner organization of the Vermont Food Bank.

I am joining to ask you to Please address the ongoing needs of Vermonters facing food insecurity by establishing a base appropriation of \$2 million dollars right now in the FY24 state budget for the Vermont Foodbank.

Addressing food security issues is the State's responsibility. The Foodbank and other organizations are ready and willing to partner with the state, as they have been for years. They do need support in order to continue to meet the increased need that we are seeing.

Since the rollback of COVID-era funding for 3Squares Vermont, the inflation of food prices in 2022 and Vermont's flooding in 2023, I have seen an exponential increase in food insecurity in the towns that we serve.

At the height of the pandemic, 3SQVT provided the maximum benefit to all who qualified.

During that time our Rutland food shelf was serving *263* individual households per month.

Now, BROC's Community Food Shelf in Rutland serves on average *704* individual households per month.

This is a 64% increase in the number of community members accessing our food shelf.

A local on disability who is struggling with transportation stated in an email to us –

“Just being comfortable enough to come in and utilize food services has saved me so much. What I don't have to spend on eggs or shelf items means I don't have to choose to go without and save. It gives me food security.”

To keep up with demand, our food shelf has had to request from the food bank more food and more funding to serve the most vulnerable populations in Vermont.

The VT Food Bank is our number one resource for purchasing food and applying for capacity building grants that allow our agency to feed an ever-growing number of your constituents.

The Vermont Food Bank focuses on environmentally beneficial practices such as the Fresh Rescue Program which captured and donated 80 TONS of groceries in 2023 for our Rutland food shelf.

With the blessing of our families in Rutland and Bennington Counties, I ask that you Please address the ongoing needs of Vermonters facing food insecurity by establishing a base appropriation of \$2 million right now in the FY24 state budget for the Vermont Foodbank.

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