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Hello, my name is Sarah Keblin, I live in Huntington, Vermont and I am the Director of Communications and Marketing at Vermont Foodbank.

I'm here to ask you to support Vermont Foodbank's request to address the ongoing needs of people in Vermont facing food insecurity, by establishing a base appropriation of \$2 million, now, in the FY24 state budget, for Vermont Foodbank.

Food insecurity for any individual or family in Vermont is not ok. There is an urgent and important need right now and for the foreseeable future, and we are asking our state leaders to support the work of the Foodbank and its many community partners across the state in meeting this urgent need.

Some of my colleagues here with Vermont Foodbank very recently talked to more than 150 neighbors in different regions of the state and asked them about their experiences with food insecurity. Two things stood out to me from their feedback—first, many people talked about never having needed food help before, but today, they are faced with that reality. Second, they talked about impossible and unrelenting choices around paying bills and transportation costs or buying food.

I had the chance to hear directly from one neighbor this fall—a professional, a single mother from Montpelier—she shared, “there's electricity, there's gas. There's my car. There's car insurance. There's the rent, the food. I was really trying to get myself under \$50 a week [for food]. What I actually stopped doing was taking [my son] grocery shopping with me ...because I couldn't afford for him to make the kind of choices that he wanted.”

It shouldn't be this hard. Until we solve for the underlying causes of hunger, we need to continue to work together to make sure the tens of thousands of people in Vermont that are facing food insecurity have access to the nourishing food they need and want.

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.