

**Joe Edson**

**South Barre**

**Testimony in support of S.215 - Give 3SquaresVT a Boost!**

I'm Joe Edson from Barre City. I am going to give you the story of how I came to be sitting in front of you. In 2021, had a major medical scare. I had appendicitis, and pneumonia. I went to Dartmouth and spent 5 days in a coma and 15 days in the hospital. Then I did 18 weeks of physical therapy.

One day at physical therapy, I talked about how I was not eating because I make sure my pets have food before I do. The physical therapy folks set me up with a social worker who then set me up with Veggie Van Go. After that, I met Carrie Stahler from the Foodbank and I have been an advocate ever since. Working with the Foodbank, I have done their newsletter, participated in legislative hearings, and done media interviews.

Through 3SquaresVT, I was receiving \$249 a month, now I am going back to \$23 a month. At home, on my refrigerator I have a chart that says Capstone, Veggie Van Go and grocery store. I go to Capstone for canned goods and eggs, then I take whatever is provided from Veggie Van Go and use that. Then at the grocery store I'm lucky to be able to purchase two gallons of milk and two loaves of bread.

I make a lot of soups and cook at home since I can't afford to go to restaurants. I want to be a voice for the people and this is a win-win for everyone. A win for the state, a win for restaurants, and a win for the people on EBT. This bill gives people confidence to go to the restaurant and use their card like a regular card and be in public. It reduces stigma and discrimination.

I always say, don't judge me unless you've walked in my shoes - everyone should be working together. I encourage this bill to be passed.