

Vermont Statewide 3SquaresVT Work Group

Age Well – BROOC Community Action in Southwestern Vermont – Capstone Community Action – Central Vermont Council on Aging – Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity – Food Research and Action Center – Hunger Free Vermont – NOFA-VT – Northeast Kingdom Community Action – Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging – Senior Solutions Council on Aging – Southeastern Vermont Community Action – Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging – United Ways of Vermont/Vermont 2-1-1 – Vermont Center for Independent Living – Vermont Foodbank – Vermont Legal Aid – Vermont Retail and Grocers' Association

To: Senator Claire Ayer, Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

From: 3SquaresVT Statewide Work Group

Re: H.271

Date: March 27, 2018

The Vermont Statewide 3SquaresVT Work Group is pleased to submit written testimony in support of H.271, a bill that we believe will protect the strong working relationship the 3SquaresVT Work Group and its members currently experience with the Department for Children and Families (DCF) long into the future, and will ensure stakeholders in the community are able to partner with DCF to address federal changes to the program.

The 3SquaresVT Work Group brings together local, state, and federal program managers and advocates in a collaborative effort to facilitate and increase participation among eligible Vermonters in 3SquaresVT. The group meets monthly to act as a gathering point where public and private sector representatives can meet on a regular basis to build ways to strengthen the program and learn from each other. We work together to plan for outreach to eligible Vermonters, develop consistent outreach strategies, messages, and materials, and to disseminate the most up-to-date information about program usage and policy or administrative changes to the program.

We are fortunate to do all of this work in close collaboration with DCF, who is a vital member of the 3SquaresVT Work Group. Through this strong relationship, service providers and advocates are able to provide feedback to DCF on programmatic changes, changes to the application and other paperwork, and to share challenges and successes applicants and participants are experiencing throughout the state. We have been meeting as a group since at least 2004, and we are a national model for successful partnerships between state agencies and community service providers. The 3SquaresVT Work Group has served as an important connection between service providers and DCF through major transitions, including the shift to an online application and the statewide benefits call center and during a period of high error rates in the processing of 3SquaresVT applications.

H.271 will protect existing practices that are key to Vermont maintaining a stable and successful 3SquaresVT program for Vermonters in need. In a time when members of Congress and the President's Administration are attempting to dismantle our nation's most important federal nutrition program, it is essential that we in Vermont work together to respond to funding cuts, policy changes, or cost shifts that threaten Vermonters' access to help buying food and DCF's ability to administer the program. H.271 creates a structure within to do just that. Thank you for your time and attention to this bill.

Sincerely,

The Above-Named Members of the Vermont Statewide 3SquaresVT Work Group