



Vermont Foodbank
www.vtfoodbank.org

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

From: Vermont Foodbank

Re: H.271

Date: March 27, 2018

The Vermont Foodbank would like to offer its support of H.271, a bill that would protect 3SquaresVT program integrity and ensure governmental transparency. We believe that H.271 will help preserve 3SquaresVT (known nationally as SNAP) as one of the most effective lines of defense against hunger. While the Vermont Foodbank and our network of partner food shelves, meal sites, senior centers, and after school programs work tirelessly to provide emergency food assistance to families struggling to put meals on the table, the problem is simply too big to fix without government programs like 3SquaresVT that are proven to lift people out of hunger.

Administrators in each state have the authority to make decisions about this federally funded program, including who is eligible, how much they receive, and how they access their benefits. In Vermont, the Department for Children and Families (DCF) administers the program and currently has the authority to make these kinds of changes without informing stakeholders, lawmakers, or people benefiting from the program ahead of time. Though our current administration in Vermont is in support of a strong 3SquaresVT program and manages it in a collaborative and transparent way, this may not always be the case. It is important to put policy in place that would protect 3SquaresVT from changing political pressures and potential damage to the program at the federal level.

The changes to SNAP being proposed federally seek to weaken the program and decrease access. The current political climate could inspire changes that would be devastating to our neighbors struggling to make ends meet. We have seen other states with a history of supporting SNAP make sudden changes to limit access and increase the administrative burden of the program. It is critical to ensure that Vermont is protected from this. Passing H.271 would ensure transparency and collaboration by requiring DCF to inform stakeholders about federal changes to SNAP and to provide lawmakers with an impact analysis of any federal change.

If 3SquaresVT were weakened, many thousands of older Vermonters, people with disabilities, children, veterans, struggling parents –working and unemployed – and others would be harmed. The state would see more hunger and food insecurity, worse health and educational outcomes, a less productive workforce, and higher health costs. More than 75,000 Vermonters rely on 3SquaresVT to help feed themselves and their families. In its current form, 3SquaresVT is respected by experts as a highly effective program that provides a path out of poverty and hunger, leading to improved educational outcomes, productivity, and health.

By passing H.271, you can help preserve the strength of this program and ensure all Vermonters have the healthy food we all need to thrive. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

John Sayles, Chief Executive Officer, Vermont Foodbank