Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee Re: FY22 Budget Adjustment
January 6, 2022

Good Morning. My name is Sarah Keblin, I am the Director of Communications, Marketing and Philanthropy for the Vermont Foodbank, and I live in Huntington, Vt. I've been at the Vermont Foodbank just six months, and have been astounded to learn the true scope of impact that this organization, and its <u>more than 300 partners</u> in every corner of Vermont, have in our state.

> I ask you to support the Vermont Foodbank with an appropriation of $6 million for FY2022 budget adjustment to address ongoing increased food insecurity in Vermont.

Last session,The Foodbank requested $8M from the FY22 budget to support operational increases due to COVID crisis response; we received $1M, used to purchase food to meet this increased need. For context, our annual food distribution has <u>sharply increased</u> since the start of the pandemic **from about 10 million pounds a year prior to March 2020 to 17.6 million pounds of food in 2021**.

Food insecurity is projected to continue as government programs end, food, heating and housing costs increase, and disruptions from COVID continue. Some of our direct distribution events are seeing record attendance in the last few months—evidence that the crisis is not over.

During the past 2 years, when federal and state emergency funding was allocated to address food and financial insecurity, we saw a real and positive impact. According to a recent USDA report, **an even deeper crisis was averted thanks to collaborative crisis response of state & federal government and local nonprofits**.

This collaboration must continue so we can ensure that our neighbors in Vermont have access to food they need. Addressing the food security crisis requires the State's continued support. The Foodbank and our partners stand ready and willing to continue to do to partner with the state.

Please support the Vermont Foodbank with an appropriation of $6 million for FY2022 to address ongoing increased food insecurity.

Thank you for listening.