

Katja Evans

Gifford Health Care (Community Partner of Vermont Foodbank)

Good afternoon, my name is Katja Evans and I am the Community Relations Coordinator at Gifford Health Care in Randolph, Vermont. Gifford Health Care is a community partner of the Vermont Foodbank, working closely to provide healthy and nutritious food through our monthly VeggieVanGo events. I am here today to ask that you please support the Vermont Foodbank with an appropriation of \$6 million for fiscal year 2023 to address the ongoing food security needs faced by Vermonters.

The pandemic has placed a tremendous strain on individuals and families. As recently published data by UVM food systems researchers show, Vermont continues to see increased levels of food insecurity compared to before the pandemic began. At Gifford, we witness this first hand at our monthly VeggieVanGo drive thru event, which has been serving an average of 535 families each month during the pandemic, compared with 260 families before April 2020. The demand has been so high in fact, we added an additional monthly VeggieVanGo event where we distribute produce directly to vulnerable patients and community partners, through our community health centers. We are now distributing food to more than 700 families per month. We are able to meet the overwhelming need of our community, because of the ongoing support from the Vermont Foodbank. As someone who volunteers to distribute food at these events, I hear time and again the positive impact these events have on people. They are so thankful supports like this are available conveniently in their community. This is why I am asking you today to support the Vermont Foodbank with an appropriation of \$6 million for fiscal year 2023, so that the work to address food insecurity right here in Vermont, in our own communities, can continue. Thank you very much for your time and your consideration.