

SNAP Awareness Day Testimony

My name is Nikki Jiraff, and I am a mother of two kids, ages 2 and 6, from Cabot. I am here to tell you how wonderful the Farm Share and Crop Cash programs have been for our family and how much we appreciate them and would like for them to continue. As a participant in these programs, we need the State of Vermont to support NOFA's request for \$478,500 in base funding to Strengthen Vermont Farm Viability and Address Food Security by sustaining two proven NOFA-VT programs: Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share.

We love to buy local food and support our local farmers. It is healthier for us and good for our environment and for our economy. But local food is so expensive that it is hard to buy very much of it. We would go to the farmers markets and pick out one or two veggies or fruits as a special treat for the kids. Last summer, with the Crop Cash and Crop Cash Plus matching funds with our EBT card, we were able to buy fruits, vegetables, meat, milk, and cheese all from local farms, every week! We were even able to buy some extra and freeze it and can it so that we are eating it now in the middle of the winter. Our local farmers, who became our friends as we saw them every week, would tell us thank you for supporting them during such a tough season. And the kids were more likely to eat their veggies when they were connected to the market and the farmers growing them. We ended up feeling like an important part of the local food scene, and that was so great! I know a lot of other families who also benefited from the Crop Cash program—it is really a wonderful way to support families and farmers.

We have also been lucky enough to receive a discounted Farm Share through NOFA for several seasons in a row. I can't tell you how much this brings joy and nutrition into our house! We get a box of fresh veggies every week from Pete's Greens, and it is like Christmas every Wednesday when the kids get to open it. Cabbage! Carrots! Bok choy! Parsnips! Everybody is so excited about the beautiful, fresh veggies. I can cook up pretty much anything from that box, and if I say "These are our farm share collards and onions (or whatever it is)" the kids will gobble them up. We are hoping to visit the farm where the veggies grow this spring. I love that our kids know where our food comes from and who grows it, it really feels like community. It is wonderful to feel like we are supporting something that is so good for everybody involved—the farms, our state's livelihood, the earth, and us.

I request that you:

Support the request for \$5 million in base funding in the FY25 budget for the Vermont Foodbank to purchase food and support community based partners.

Support the request for \$2 million in base funding for the Vermont Area Agencies on Aging to support the increased demand for Meals on Wheels to meet the nutritional needs of the growing demographic of Older Vermonters.

Support S. 215 OR H. 703 which seeks to establish a Restaurant Meals Program for SNAP participants in Vermont, and direct the state SNAP agency to produce a transition plan to increase the SNAP minimum benefit amount for all participants.

Support the request for \$478,500 in base funding to Strengthen Vermont Farm Viability and Address Food Security by sustaining two proven NOFA-VT programs: CROP CASH (PLUS) and FARM SHARE