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Charles Senick

Treasurer and Board Member, Richmond Farmers Market

Chittenden County

Testimony Regarding SNAP/3SquaresVT and NOFA Crop Cash Impact

I offer testimony today in my role as Treasurer of our Farmer's Market for the past six years – what our market is, how we benefit SNAP recipients, and perhaps most importantly, how they benefit the market.

- The Farmer's Market, at its core, is a collection of local vendors offering locally grown or made produce, prepared foods, baked goods, beverages, arts, crafts, and services
- The Market provides opportunities for local start-ups: we welcomed 16 vendors in their first year in the 2023 season
- We offer youth booths, for our younger entrepreneurs
- We offer community booths, and have hosted our town's police, fire, and EMT services, the Racial Equity group and Climate Action Committee, our local library and Cub Scouts and many other organizations seeking to inform and develop relationships with our residents
- We offer free entertainment in the form of local music every week
- We provide our SNAP customers with affordable access to locally grown produce

Locally grown produce can be expensive for a SNAP recipient, especially when compared to the price of mass-produced goods sold at supermarkets and chain stores. This is why the Crop Cash program from NOFA-VT (Northeastern Organic Farmers Association of VT) is so important. Crop Cash is a supplemental program that increases a SNAP recipient's spending power at the Farmer's Market. When a customer swipes their EBT card to withdraw SNAP funds, they receive additional Crop Cash funds that make our agricultural vendors' goods far more affordable. The ability to provide this benefit to those with food insecurity, is a wonderful aspect of being involved in our organization, and we have SNAP and NOFA's Crop Cash programs to thank for it.

In terms of how our SNAP customers benefit the Farmer's Market:

- The agricultural vendors – those vendors that accept SNAP & Crop Cash (produce, meat, fish, eggs, dairy, honey, maple syrup, baked goods / bread) – are the foundation for our Farmer's Market, regularly accounting for just under half of our Market's revenue – total dollars spent on our vendors' goods. Without these vendors, there is no Farmer's Market or any of the benefits and offerings I just described.
- SNAP and Crop Cash spending at the Farmer's Market historically accounts for ~10% of agricultural vendors' total revenue, providing these vendors with a reliable foundation in what is broadly known as a lower-margin business.
- For the 2023 season, with expanded pEBT and Crop Cash Plus programs, SNAP and Crop Cash spending accounted for 25% of agricultural vendor revenue, allowing those vendors to maintain 2022 total revenue levels. In other words, these program expansions offset the impact of flood and weather-related events at our Market.

- Our agricultural vendors need their SNAP and Crop Cash customers. Our non-agricultural vendors need the agricultural vendors to have a complete market. Our customers and other local organizations rely on the Farmers Market for various reasons.
- I implore you fund the SNAP programs as requested, and the \$478,500 funding being requested by NOFA-VT. It is incredibly important to our SNAP customers, our vendors, our Market, and our community.

Thank you!