



Testimony
January 30, 2024

My name is Cindy Brown and I am Foodshare coordinator for NIA in Cabot, Vermont. I've been a volunteer for NIA for 18 years. This past year has been the worst I've ever seen. Our numbers of people seeking food boxes from our food share has doubled, from 4,000 boxes in 2022 to over 8,000 boxes in 2023.

It's really sad. We are seeing more elderly people who are food insecure, even if there are two people with incomes.

I 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.

The Vermont Foodbank supports us. Without them getting their support, we wouldn't get the food we need. We can't afford to purchase the food.

I also 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.

This program helps a lot of elderly people.

I also 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.

We gave out 400 meals every foodshare (800 a month) to families in need who come to our foodshare. It also really helped our local grocery store that prepared the meals for us.

Finally, I 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.

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Some of the local farmers we've been able to support with this program also stay in touch and donate food to us when they have extra. Farming is very important to our community, and we are proud to be able to support the farmers and keep as much food production in our local community as possible.

Sincerely,

Cindy Brown
Foodshare Coordinator for Neighbors in Action, Cabot Vermont



The Story of The Food Box

It all begins with our Volunteer Coordinator going online to the Vermont Foodbank website and ordering thousands of pounds of food to be picked up by a rental truck on Food Share Day. She also calls the Foodbank two days prior to Food Share Day to order the veggies and whatever extra items are needed.

On Food Share Day our group of 10 to 15 very devoted volunteers arrive at 7:00 am and start filling boxes with canned and dry goods. When the truck arrives at Faith in Action at approximately 10:00 am, the volunteers unload the truck and put the perishables in the boxes.

Our outside volunteer approaches the vehicles and gives each one a number and asks how many you are picking up for. You then pull your vehicle up to the front and another set of volunteers will bring the boxes out to you.

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