

Carrie Stahler – [cstahler@vtfoodbank.org](mailto:cstahler@vtfoodbank.org), 802-793-4923

Chair Kitchel and Chair Lanphere and committee members, thank you for your time. My name is Carrie Stahler, I am the Government and Public Affairs Officer at the Vermont Foodbank.

I'm here to ask you to please address the ongoing needs of Vermonters facing food insecurity by establishing a base appropriation of \$3 million in the FY24 budget for the Vermont Foodbank to purchase and distribute food.

Over the past 3 years we have worked in new and different ways to ensure people have the food they need. But as federal support programs end, food insecurity and hunger have increased. [A team at UVM found that 2 in 5, or 40%, of people in Vermont have experienced food insecurity in the past year and a half.](#) That number is higher than at any point during the pandemic.

Soon federal SNAP Pandemic Emergency Allotments will end. These pandemic supports provided 72,000 people in Vermont with the maximum federal food benefit for their household size. In April, households, on average, will receive \$100-500 less each month to buy food.

The Foodbank and its network food shelves and meal sites are a safety net to put food on our neighbors' tables. But our network cannot fill the gap left by federal programs – and we cannot do this work alone. **Addressing food security is the State's responsibility. The Foodbank and our network are ready to continue to partner with the state, as we have for years. We need financial support in order to continue to meet the increased need that we are seeing.**

Last week a neighbor shared that he is worried he will have to start skipping meals in order to pay his other bills when the SNAP Emergency Allotments end. Our network food shelves have seen an increase in guests since news of this change broke in January. People we serve - seniors on fixed incomes, those on disability, and single parent households - will be the most affected by these changes. They are also the ones who are least able to make up for these lost benefits.

I ask that you provide the resources that the Vermont Foodbank needs to continue to support our neighbors ongoing need for food by establishing \$3 million in base funding appropriation in the FY24 budget for the Vermont Foodbank and our network so we can help to meet the needs of our neighbors together.

Thank you for your time.