

Budget Adjustment Public Testimony for 1/15/2026

Susan Drew, Elmore, VT

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Hello, I'm Susan Drew, from Elmore, and I am the Program and Development Manager for the Lamoille Community Food Share in Morrisville. I'm here today to ask for your support of an additional \$1.5 million allocation to Vermont Foodbank in budget adjustment to support the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters (VFFV) local food purchasing program.

I believe food is the most basic human need. At our food pantry, we're seeing more than 500 neighbor visits per month. We gave out close to 400 food baskets for Thanksgiving. Hunger is not going away in Lamoille County.

I believe the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters campaign is a vital piece of the puzzle that keeps our community fed. For starters, people love the fresh produce that we purchase from local farms through the program. Fresh produce is so important to a person's health and well-being. Yes, we give out canned food and produce rescued from grocery stores. But neither is as yummy as fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables. When food tastes better, a person will eat more of it. Fresh produce beats packaged anything. I know this is true in my own kitchen, and at our pantry where the fresh produce is snapped up as soon as we put it out.

Secondly, this program supports small local farmers. What will we do when the last of the farms are gone? I hate to think of it. Fresh produce will be more expensive because it will have to come from farther away. And what about the farmers? What will they do? Will they be able to stay in Lamoille County? We already know how expensive it is here. The best solution all the way around is to support our local farmers and to support our food pantry system. VFFV does both.

Please, I ask for your support of Vermont Foodbank's \$1.5M request to fully fund Vermonters Feeding Vermonters.

Thank you.