

To: Joint Appropriations Committee

Re: FY27 Budget Public Hearing - VT Foodbank Advocacy Request

From: Al Homens, MD

Date: February 19, 2026

My name is Al Homans, and I have lived in Huntington for the last 33 years. I am writing to ask that you fully fund Vermont Foodbank's 5-million-dollar request, including \$2 million for Vermonters Feeding Vermonters, \$1 million for the network food shelves and \$1 million for Ready Response in disasters and emergencies.

As a Pediatric specialist the importance of social determinants of health, in particular food insecurity, has been very clear. The magnitude of food insecurity in our local communities continues to astound me. Now in retirement, I volunteer at the Vermont Foodbank. I have been able to follow some of the local produce from farmer to recipient. I have joined with other volunteers gleaning produce from local smaller farms and seen how this program is a "win-win" for farmers who find themselves with unanticipated excess, and for the recipients who receive fresh local produce. I have helped sort donations of produce and other groceries from local businesses and then had the privilege to help distribute quality nutrition to several of the Vegie Van Go sites. One of the first things we volunteers do at the distribution sites is to check how much of the produce originates from our local Vermont farms. A plus for me is to be able to connect, in some small way, with children at one of the school sites.

About a year ago I witnessed a particularly poignant example of the Foodbank's impact. While helping with produce distribution at a Vegie Van Go site, a car drove up with a young woman in obvious distress with tears in her eyes. When I mentioned this to my wife back at home she hesitated, then informed me that the woman works as a paraeducator at a local school. Although fully employed, the low wages, combined with unanticipated family issues, placed her in a position where she could not make ends meet. Nutrition provided by The Vermont Foodbank allows her to get by. When I look at the long lines of cars waiting at these sites, and understand the stories they represent, I realize how fortunate we are to have The Vermont Foodbank. Again, I urge you to fully fund \$5 million request, including \$2 million for Vermonters Feeding Vermonters, \$1 million for the network food shelves and \$1 million for Ready Response in disasters and emergencies.

Thank you for your time.

Alan Homans MD