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**Casey Winterson**  
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**Northeast Kingdom Community Action**

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My name is Casey Winterson. I am the Director of Economic and Community-Based Services at Northeast Kingdom Community Action and a resident of Burke. I am here tonight in strong support of Vermont Foodbank's \$5 million appropriation request, including the \$1 million investment in the Ready Response System.

Weather-related disasters are becoming more frequent. That is not unique to Vermont. What is unique, and what will continue to define us, is how we show up for one another. When floodwaters rise, the immediate response is neighbors helping neighbors, without being asked and without hesitation.

NEKCA has been part of that response, supporting families across Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans counties during repeated flooding events.

In the wake of each flood, critical support from Vermont Foodbank made our response possible. Within hours of waters receding, we were connected, assessing needs, coordinating logistics, and mobilizing resources. Trucks carrying food and water arrived quickly, allowing us to respond immediately and without having to spend time and taking resources shopping at the market.

On Red Village Road in Lyndonville, residents were completely cut off after the road was washed away. With support from the Foodbank, my team loaded our transit van and pushed it to its limits, meeting neighbors on the other side of the water where their four-wheelers could reach us. We met seniors who had lost the food in their refrigerators and parents who were unsure of how they would feed their children, their food storage area still being pumped out. In those moments, people are overwhelmed, exhausted, and scared.

The Ready Response System is about preparedness. It ensures that when the next disaster hits, Vermont is ready, ready to respond faster, coordinate better, and reduce the suffering of our neighbors in those critical early days.

In the hardest moments, food is more than a meal, it is stability, dignity, and hope. This investment protects all three.

I respectfully urge you to appropriate the full \$5 million to Vermont Foodbank.

Thank you for your time and consideration.