

February 5, 2026

Mary Mullally

Hunger Mountain Co-op, Montpelier

3SquaresVT Awareness Day

House Commerce & Economic Development

- Hello, my name is Mary Mullally. I live and work in Montpelier as the General Manager of Hunger Mountain Co-op. Thank you for having me here today to discuss this important issue and to share the perspective of both a grocery store and the broader local food system.
- I'm here today to talk about 3SquaresVT and to ask you please fully fund the administrative costs needed for state fiscal year 2027 to counter federal funding changes and keep 3SquaresVT available and accessible to people in Vermont.
- Full funding for 3SquaresVT administration is critical to keep this program available for all who are eligible in Vermont. Investing the necessary additional funds will allow Vermont to continue leveraging over **\$150 million** in federal dollars that are spent directly in our food system during the same 12-month period.
- At the Co-op, we proudly accept SNAP/EBT to help make healthy food accessible to as many people as possible. People with a variety of health issues rely on the Co-op to purchase items that help them to heal and eat within dietary restrictions. Reductions in SNAP benefits will put people at risk for health complications based on their economic ability to access the foods they need.
- Shoppers who used SNAP/EBT payment methods spent almost \$400,000 (7,973 transactions) at the Co-op in FY 2025. This accounts for 1.3% of our sales. We, like most grocery stores, operate on thin margins, and any reduction in our income impacts our bottom line.
- Additionally, approximately 40% of the Co-op's sales are to local vendors. That could amount to over \$150,000 not making its way to our local farmers and producers – and we are just one outlet. This is money spent that stays in our local economy and allows small farmers and producers to thrive.
- Without the full funding needed to operate 3SquaresVT, the state will have to greatly reduce eligibility to restrict who can participate, or pull out of operating the program entirely.
- A cut in these benefits will not only affect the recipients but also the entire local food economy. So please, fully fund the administrative costs needed for state fiscal year 2027 to counter federal funding changes and keep 3SquaresVT available and accessible to people in Vermont

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- Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions.