

Testimony – 3SquaresVT Awareness Day

Thursday, February 5, 2026

Katherine LaPrad, program participant and Burlington resident

My name is Katherine LaPrad, I live in Burlington. I'm here to celebrate the importance of 3SquaresVT and to ask you to:

1. Support Vermont Foodbank's request for a \$5 million total appropriation in FY27, including \$2 million to support their network of partners, \$2 million for the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters local food purchasing program, and \$1 million for Ready Response to ensure food access in disasters and emergencies. ([more info here](#))
2. 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.

As a retiree on a limited, fixed income, taking care of my young grandchild full time is a struggle financially. The struggle is REAL. I love my granddaughter dearly and will try my very best to support her to do well in school. She is a wonderful, kind, thoughtful, polite young girl who is a huge help to grandma. I assisted her to get her driver's license. Now she does most of the errands, picks up groceries and medicine for grandma. Aroha has been an honor student for 3 years at South Burlington High School, takes Chinese language lessons each Friday evening, participates in Track and Field, Cross Country and is an active member of the Civil Air Patrol. She aspires to be a pilot.

Each month I prioritize what I absolutely need to pay be it dental bills, grandma's medicine, gas, insurance, repairs for the car, or food. Every year the amount of my social security check goes up a small percentage, but so does the cost of medical insurance, car insurance, labor fuel to heat our homes -- I keep the temperature in my home at 57 degrees and close the bedroom doors during the day to keep expenses to a minimum -- electricity, phone/internet bills. I struggle each month deciding what I can go without. We are very conservative. We buy used clothing, shoes and household items. I cook from scratch. We do not buy prepared or packaged food as it is expensive and not healthy. I mend torn or broken items. I do my own household repairs including plumbing, electrical, carpentry and some car repairs.

Receiving 3 Squares has been a tremendous help to us. We can buy fresh, healthy fruit, yogurt, vegetables, fish, meat and bread each month for which we are most appreciative for. First I want to give a GIANT shout out of thanks to The Vermont

Foodbank team, especially Ariana Matthew's-Salzman for their kind assistance in helping us secure 3 Squares Vermont.

Without Ariana's assistance this would not have been possible. We are forever grateful.

I tried to navigate the state maze for many, many months and only received more paperwork and rejection letters. It went on for many many months! The data we received back was often incorrect. Our file was mixed up with another family; the paperwork received showed additional members living at my residence (ONLY my granddaughter and I live here), misspelled names despite completing the paperwork and sending it in. I would call, be put on hold, transferred, then the call dropped. I finally resorted to going down to the local office early in the morning to talk to a REAL person with my file and ID's. Two folks in Burlington office (Angel and Denise) were PRESENT, polite, kind and helpful.

We had to rely on the local Food Banks to survive until I could receive Social Security. It was very frustrating and discouraging. I went to bed hungry many, many nights.

I encourage you to think about how to create solutions that work for people, particularly people on fixed incomes like me, to make sure we can get the food we need and pay our bills. That means fully funding the 3SquaresVT administrative costs so that the people who are there to help us apply for the program are well-trained, patient, and kind. It means fully funding Vermont Foodbank's request so that I can use food shelves when I need to. Thank you for your attention and your support for these critical programs that help people like me and my granddaughter.