

February 6, 2025

Zoe Christiansen, SNAP recipient and Capstone Community action food shelf participant, 3SquaresVT Awareness Day Testimony

Hello, My name is Zoe Christiansen and I live in East Montpelier.

I'm here today to voice my support for 3SquaresVT and to ask you to support Vermont Foodbank's request for \$5 million in the FY26 budget to ensure Vermont Foodbank and their partners are prepared when disasters strike our neighbors in towns across Vermont, as well as to purchase and distribute food, and support the network of community-based food shelves and meal sites.

I am a ninth-generation Vermonter, a fourth-generation Vermont politician, and I grew up on my family's dairy farm. I am the Vice-Chair of the East Montpelier select-board, and a commissioner on the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

I am also disabled and a SNAP recipient. Thanks to 3SquaresVT and Capstone, I've been able to eat three meals a day for the first time in my adult life.

These programs literally make my survival possible. If it wasn't for Capstone Community Action, and the Montpelier food shelf, I would not have access to food after my benefits run out before the end of the month.

Because I can eat, I can survive, and therefore I can contribute to the best of my capacity for my community that I love.

Investing in Vermont Foodbank's request for \$5 million in the FY26 budget is an investment in the practical well-being of our communities. As someone who has benefited directly from programs like 3SquaresVT and Capstone Community Action, I understand firsthand the essential role these services play in ensuring that Vermonters can stay healthy and contribute to our communities. Supporting this request means providing reliable support for disaster preparedness, food distribution, and the network of community-based food shelves and meal sites that so many depend on.

I urge you to support Vermont Foodbank's request for \$5 million in the FY26 budget so that every Vermonter has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you.