

Testimony Regarding 3SquaresVT Food Assistance

Vermont House Committee on Food Stamps October 29, 2025

Dear Members of the Committee,

I leave with you today about a case that represents not merely an administrative oversight, but a profound moral failure. It is the story of NP (not her real name), a 62-year-old widow who holds a Special Immigrant Visa, and whose life bears testament to both extraordinary courage and unimaginable loss.

The Price of Service

NP worked for the United States Agency for International Development in Afghanistan. In that capacity, she served American interests with dedication and at tremendous personal risk. For her association with the United States government, she paid the ultimate price. Before her very eyes, her son was killed when the Taliban took over. A life, extinguished brutally, because she chose to work alongside us. Because she believed in the mission. Because she trusted that America would stand with those who stood with us.

No one should have to watch their family member murdered for the crime of helping the United States. Yet NP did. And she carries that trauma every single day.

Arriving in Vermont

On September 8th, NP arrived in Springfield, Vermont. She came bearing not only the scars of trauma, but the weight of profound grief and displacement. At 62 years old, she found herself in an unfamiliar land, without family, with limited English proficiency, and struggling with severe trauma that no human being should have to endure alone.

We immediately applied for food assistance through the 3SquaresVT program. It was basic need, the most fundamental form of support: help putting food on the table while she attempted to begin rebuilding a life shattered by violence.

Denied the Basics

Her application was not approved. Because the Economic Services Division was already issuing termination letters during the period of her arrival, NP's case fell through the cracks as a result of federal policy change. She never received food stamps. Not one dollar of assistance has reached this widow who sacrificed everything for American interests.

Her per capita fund payment of \$1,639 remains pending approval from the State Department. But refugees like NP cannot eat promises. They cannot survive on bureaucratic delays. They need food *today*.

A Question of Justice

NP is a woman whose husband and child were brutally murdered because of her work for the United States government. She holds a Special Immigrant Visa precisely because our nation recognized its debt to her. She came to Vermont seeking safety and a chance to survive her grief.

And yet, she cannot receive basic food assistance from the very government for which her son was killed.

How do we explain this to her? How do we look into the eyes of a traumatized widow and tell her that federal policy change prevent us from ensuring she has food to eat? How do we reconcile our nation's promise to protect those who served us with the reality of a woman going hungry in Vermont?

Our Moral Obligation

This Committee has the power to ensure that individuals like NP do not fall through the cracks. Special Immigrant Visa holders are not ordinary immigrants. They are individuals who risked everything, often losing everything, because they believed in America's mission and trusted in America's promises.

When a woman loses her child to violence committed because she worked for the United States, and then cannot access food assistance in the state where she seeks refuge, it represents a policy failure of the highest order. It is not simply about one case. It is about whether Vermont and our nation will honor the commitment we made to those who stood with us.

I urge this Committee to:

1. Immediately address the barriers preventing Special Immigrant Visa holders from accessing emergency food assistance during transition periods.
2. Create an alternative program for refugees and SIV holders who arrive after the policy came into effect
3. Ensure that no individual who risked their life for American interests goes without basic food assistance due to federal policy failures.

NP's story is one of unimaginable loss and remarkable survival. She deserves better than to struggle for basic sustenance in the country that promised her safety. She deserves the dignity of knowing that her sacrifice mattered, and that Vermont will not abandon those who gave everything for America.

The question before this Committee is simple: Will we honor our promises to those who paid the ultimate price to stand with us?

Respectfully submitted,