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Budget Public Hearing Testimony 2/13/25

Thank you for having me here today. I am Denise Walton, community member and resident of Concord Vt. I volunteer at Sid's Pantry.

I'm asking you to please appropriate \$5million for Vermont Foodbank - for responsive readiness, for food purchase and distribution and to support network capacity for the 220+ network partner food shelves and meal sites across the state.

In the Community of Concord, many residents are elderly, widowed, disabled, veterans and families with 2-3 generations in one household. It is also a rural area, where transportation is a barrier to food security.

Sid's Pantry is open monthly for residents of Essex County and patients at Concord health center. Currently we serve 30-50 families with 1-7 members. Being located at the Health Center makes a great community partnership. We are able to set out fresh produce right in the waiting room of the health center, allowing access to HEALTHY options and choices. With our Vermonters Feeding Vermonters grant, we are able to buy LOCAL food from farmers in our area. This brings some economic security to those farmers and GREAT food to our community.

In the summer, we host a monthly HEALTHY lunch, as a pop up at the health center using fresh foods and staples from Vermont Foodbank. Folks get a healthy lunch and some social time.

I am proud of our little community of Concord and its Residents. Sids pantry has grown over the years. We have worked hard with the food bank and received support, training and grants. With the requested funding for VFB, we can continue to provide food security to those who need it most: our elders, veterans, widows and widowers and to the families who are stretching their food budgets.

Please appropriate \$5million for Vermont Foodbank - for responsive readiness, for food purchase and distribution and to support network capacity for the 220+ network partner food shelves and meal sites across the state.

Thank you for your consideration and support to help food security in Vermont.