



March 21, 2025

Representative Robin Scheu, Chair
House Committee on Appropriations

Senator Andrew Perchlik, Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chair Scheu, Chair Perchlik, and Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees;

On behalf of the Vermont Retail & Grocers Association (VRGA), representing more than 300 stores, grocers, and family-run businesses across Vermont, we are writing in strong support of the FY26 budget request from the State's Attorneys and Sheriffs.

Our members serve as the cornerstones of Vermont's downtowns, villages, and rural communities. These are multi-generation family grocery stores, local markets, convenience stores, and retailers that not only provide essential goods and services, but also create jobs and support local economies.

But our members are facing a crisis in facing a surge in retail theft and organized retail crime. What was once occasional shoplifting has escalated into repeat and coordinated theft, often involving large quantities of goods and creating serious safety concerns for employees and customers alike. For many of these businesses, the losses are significant and unsustainable.

We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the State's Attorneys and Sheriffs to respond to these crimes. They are valued partners to our business community. But we also know they are stretched to the breaking point. Without additional funding to increase their capacity, these crimes will continue to overwhelm the system and leave our members vulnerable.

VRGA strongly supports the request for additional prosecutors, paralegals, victim advocates, administrative staff, and transport deputies. These roles are critical to ensuring cases are handled swiftly and consistently, holding offenders accountable, and sending the clear message that Vermont takes retail crime seriously.

We also urge you to reduce the vacancy savings burden placed on the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs. Requiring the Department to leave positions unfilled, even as caseloads increase, is not sustainable. Restoring these funds will allow the Department to fill vital positions and meet the growing demand for public safety services.

Our members are resilient, but they cannot face this challenge alone. Fully funding the State's Attorneys and Sheriffs FY26 budget request is an investment in public safety, community stability, and Vermont's local businesses.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of Vermont's small business community.

Sincerely,

Ed Fox
President

Vermont Retail & Grocers Association