

My name is Carrie Stahler; I am the Gov't Affairs Officer at the Vermont Foodbank and live in Lyndon. When the State of Vermont steps into leadership for food security, our collective action is successful. Vermont Foodbank is seeking a total of \$5 million in state FY27 for 3 purposes:

1. \$2 million to fully fund the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters grant program at the AAFM. This program grants funds to purchase Vermont grown and raised foods that Vermont Foodbank distributes through food shelves, meal sites and direct distribution programs serving all 14 counties. In FY26, \$885,000 was appropriated to Vermonters Feeding Vermonters. The FY27 House budget has \$400k. We ask that you retain \$400k that is in the House budget.

2. \$2 million to fund food and services to support local food shelves and meal sites across the state – this funding keeps shelves stocked at our 220 partner organizations. In FY26 this was funded at \$1 million and came through DCF and is currently funded at \$0 in the FY27 House budget. We ask if additional one-time money is available, some be allocated to this portion of our request.

3. \$1 million to fund Ready Response to ensure food and water is available during disasters and other emergencies. Through this program we seek to formalize a relationship with Vermont Emergency Management to ensure Vermont Foodbank and our partners are prepared and resourced to address acute, short-term needs for food and water when an emergency or disaster occurs. Language creating a Ready Response Grant Program is traveling in H.935. That bill allocates \$500,000 in one-time funding to this program, and we ask that you work to retain that level.

We also ask that you support the Benefit Assisters request you heard about earlier. We view this work as a critical strategy to relieve pressure on the charitable food system by helping more people access or retain SNAP and Medicaid benefits. Funding at the requested \$3.496 million will directly help meet the basic needs of people in Vermont.

Thank you for your consideration. In a time of many difficult choices, basic human needs must not get lost, and the State of Vermont can make policy choices that will ensure food security for everyone who lives here.