

Good afternoon members of the committee and thank you for taking the time today to hear about the deeply concerning impacts that recent federal policy changes will have on our communities. My name is Autumn Moen, I live in Burlington, and I work at Hunger Free Vermont. We are a statewide organization working to end the injustice of hunger. We believe that even in the most challenging of circumstances, the State of Vermont can make policy choices that will ensure food security for everyone who lives here.

We help implement and advocate for programs that work to meet people's basic needs, including SNAP - the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known in Vermont as 3SquaresVT - which is the program I am here to talk about today.

The cuts and changes made to SNAP in the budget reconciliation bill are vast and will cause lasting harm to people in Vermont both in the immediate future and for years to come. I have provided an informational sheet along with my testimony that goes over each of these cuts and changes in greater detail. I know this is a lot of information to process - this is why I am going to repeat some information that I shared last time I spoke with you all, and also, once again, strongly encourage committees to hold hearings this fall to gain a deeper understanding of these policy changes and how they will impact Vermont, ahead of the 2026 session.

Briefly, here is a timeline of the most significant changes and their impacts:

On October 1, 2025:

- Refugees, asylees, and other immigrant groups - will be barred from accessing SNAP. This will impact as many as 1,600 current participants.
- Work reporting requirements will apply to many previously exempt groups. These reporting requirements are simply paperwork burdens meant to remove folks from benefits, and will put about 7,700 Vermonters at risk of losing their benefits.

On October 1, 2026, the federal government will reduce the administrative funding provided to states to operate SNAP by 50%.

- This will cost the state of Vermont an additional \$8.4 million in administrative costs, which will need to be allocated in the state FY2027 budget.

On October 1, 2027, states with Payment Error Rates of 6% or higher will, for the first time in the program's history, have to pay a percentage of benefits in addition to paying 75% of program administrative costs.

- Vermont's Payment Error Rate is currently below this threshold, and we must keep it that way, otherwise this could cost the state between \$7 million to \$22 million annually starting in state FY2028.
- The only way we preserve Vermont's low Payment Error Rate is to continue to robustly fund SNAP administrative costs, including call center staff and community-based program outreach efforts.

Our immediate recommendations to help provide the best possible outcomes for people in Vermont are threefold:

- 1) Maximize federal funding. We do this in 2 ways.

- a) First we MUST ensure that at least \$8.4 million is appropriated in state FY27 to cover the additional SNAP administrative costs so that the State continues to do the great work that they are doing and preserve Vermont's low Payment Error Rate.
  - b) Second, we need to prioritize pushing ahead with the Integrated Eligibility and Enrollment project in state FY27, while we still have access to a 50/50% federal match; modernizing our technology is key to ensuring our Payment Error Rates stay low and that everyone eligible can to access SNAP so that we continue to maximize federal funding to meet people's basic needs.
- 2) Provide concrete supports for people who can't access federal programs.
- a) One way we can do this is to immediately provide partial funding to Bridges to Health, a health outreach program under UVM Extension whose mission is to address gaps in access to health care and other social services for immigrant families - a mission that will be more important than ever as humanitarian immigrants lose access to both SNAP and Medicaid in a few short weeks. We are all actively working to find the best path forward to providing basic needs supports for this population, and Bridges to Health is currently doing just that effectively and efficiently- and they will close in January without this immediate funding.
- 3) Raise state revenue.
- a) What is absolutely critical is that we do not fall into the trap of pitting vital programs against each other - the question should not be, for example, whether we fund housing programs or food access programs - the question should be how can we raise state revenue to weather these uncertain times and center the collective care of everyone in our state. We ask you to explore options to raise revenue, including the Fair Share for Vermont Campaign which calls on the state to implement a high-income tax surcharge on the top 1% of earners in Vermont which would raise \$74 million annually.

Our federal government is backing away from our state and our people. During times like these, we need the State of Vermont to step into leadership for meeting people's most basic needs for food, medical care, and shelter, so that our collective action will be successful.