

Good afternoon, members of the committee. Thank you for offering this time today to share about the impacts of federal policy changes.

My name is Carrie Stahler, I live in Lyndon, and work at Vermont Foodbank. As Vermont's only food bank, we partner with a network of more than 300 community organizations statewide to function as the supplemental safety net for food access for about 70,000 people per month. This work is also deeply impacted by public policy, and we believe that the State can make policy choices that will ensure the food security of everyone who lives in Vermont.

I will talk about federal impacts on three levels:

1. Our organization
2. Our partner community food access organizations
3. Individual households

### **1. Impact on Vermont Foodbank**

We've already experienced federal cuts—such as reduced USDA TEFAP food, that I shared with you at your last meeting.

While we secured a tariff exemption for weekly produce from Canada, other imported foods like soup are still impacted. Domestic and imported food prices are rising due to tariffs and inflation, stretching our limited food purchasing budget.

We're also affected by the end of SNAP-Ed funding, which supported our VT Fresh program - funding ends 10/1.

### **2. Impact on Community Partner Organizations**

Federal changes also impact our partner organizations. These independent nonprofit organizations rely on multiple funding streams. Some receive federal funds, as is the case for CAP agencies, many of whom use Community Service Block Grants to help them host a food shelf. We also know that our healthcare partners are only able provide food access support if they have funding.

There are very few direct funding sources for food access, so organizations are increasingly making very difficult decisions. Partners have already had to limit hours, limit how frequently people can come to shop, or had to close their doors. Without these community partners, we cannot get food to people where they need it.

Five minutes is not nearly enough time to cover this; I encourage you to hold additional hearings to understand these complex impacts.

### **3. Individual Households**

Finally, the household-level impact of federal changes is the most challenging to track because households' needs differ and how they meet those needs differs. Still, we know:

- About 65,000 households in Vermont are on 3SquaresVT, bringing in about \$155 million in federal funds last year, or about \$12 million per month that flows through local grocery and food retailers into the Vermont economy.
- For every 1 meal a food bank provides, SNAP, or 3SquaresVT, provides 9. That is a 9-fold impact on changes to direct household federal food assistance.
- SNAP eligibility is linked to eligibility for other programs, making SNAP even more essential.
- I know Hunger Free VT is speaking later and will share more about the changes to SNAP, but, I cannot understate the impact to food security from changes to federal food and healthcare policy.

Our recommendations to you are to prioritize support for neighbors across Vermont by:

- 1. Holding additional committee hearings this fall about these federal food and healthcare policy changes to be ready on Day 1 of the 2026 session.**
- 2. Maximizing Federal Funding by**
  - a. Ensuring that the additional SNAP administrative costs are appropriated in the FY27 budget – this is roughly \$8 million
  - b. Continuing to appropriate funds to match federal investments, particularly in efforts that directly impact household budgets.
- 3. Provide concrete supports for people who cannot access federal programs:**
  - a. This includes continuing to fund our work with our partners to ensure that these community organizations have food to share to help them remain solvent in the face of higher need.
  - b. Prioritizing programs like Meals on Wheels & Bridges to Health, a health outreach program under UVM Extension that works with organizations in our network to provide food to immigrant families. Without funding, Bridges to Health will end in January.
- 4. Prioritize needs of Vermonters facing food insecurity:** This means that when there are difficult moments that feel like “either-or” choices of one critical program OR another, we must find “both-and” solutions.

Thank you for your time.