

Dear Governor Scott:

We are reaching out to request that you delay fully lifting the State Emergency Order to ensure the continued safety of vulnerable Vermonters until more complete plans are in place to expand State support for access to healthy food and safe housing.

We applaud the efforts to ensure that gaps remain filled while work continues on more permanent solutions, and appreciate the leadership you and State agencies have provided in addressing the health, housing, and economic needs of Vermonters throughout the pandemic. Our state vaccination rates are exemplary and will ensure protection from COVID-19 into the future. However, while we share hope that many aspects of life are returning to normal, for many Vermonters, the emergency is far from over. And given Vermont's dearth of low-income housing and a food insecurity rate of 1 in 10 prior to the pandemic, "normal" was never acceptable. The recovery for Vermonters with low incomes, for those experiencing homelessness, and for those facing hunger, will be slow. Maintaining access to critical FEMA-funded programs supporting Vermonters' access to basic needs like food, emergency housing, and more depends upon the continuation of a declared State of Emergency in some form. That support is essential.

The economic impact of COVID-19 remains widespread and continues to severely impact communities across the state. Hunger remains higher than ever before and levels have not decreased in the past year; an eviction crisis still looms; hunger and housing insecurity also disproportionately affect families with children and BIPOC Vermonters. The increased vaccination rate and continual decrease in COVID cases are certainly cause for celebration, but most people in our state are still living in a state of emergency. 12% of Vermonters report that their children aren't eating enough because families can't afford food, and 23% are struggling to cover usual household expenses. Many remain unable to access newly available jobs due to challenges with childcare, transportation, and more. 12% report struggling to keep up with rent, and many others cannot find housing at all. The charitable food and shelter systems simply cannot be a sustained support for all of these needs.

The State of Emergency supports our businesses as well as the most vulnerable. Since March of 2020, the Department for Children and Families Economic Services Division has issued over \$45 million in emergency allotment benefits to 3SquaresVT households. These funds not only support the food budgets of nearly 70,000 Vermonters, but they stimulate our economy and support our local food retailers and farmers by keeping millions of federal dollars each month in our communities, especially during the summer and fall months when local food is abundant in stores and at farmers markets throughout the state.

The innovative and highly successful Vermont Everyone Eats program has distributed over one million meals purchased from local restaurants to Vermonters across the state through 134 distribution sites. We join you in celebrating this initiative's triple-impact approach, as it supports local businesses, farmers and growers, and food access. Restaurant owners across the state have shared that this program is the primary reason why they have remained in business and not had to lay off their staff members. Hundreds of people, in particular older,

disabled, and homeless Vermonters unable to otherwise access food, are depending on this innovative program right now. Continued funding for Vermont Everyone Eats is also tied to the continued state of emergency declaration.

Loss of funds tied to the declaration of emergency that are helping households afford basic needs in this unprecedented time would be detrimental to Vermont's economy and health.

We request that when reducing COVID restrictions to help open up our economy, you will also **recognize the ongoing health and economic distress of many Vermonters and sustain key elements of the Emergency Order to protect Vermonters who are food insecure and facing homelessness.** Specifically, we request ongoing support for prepared meals to eligible recipients of the GA Emergency Housing vouchers residing at hotels, a ramp down of the Vermont Everyone Eats Program that allows hubs and restaurants to continue to fill in the most critical regional gaps in meal provision, and your administration's continued work to ensure the continuation of 3SquaresVT emergency benefit allotments for as long as possible. We believe that unless a new plan is in place to ensure all in Vermont can meet these two most basic needs, our entire recovery is jeopardized.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and for your ongoing work to ensure not only a strong recovery from this pandemic, but a future in which all Vermonters' most basic needs are secure.

Sincerely,

The 130 undersigned Vermont businesses and organizations:

ACORN Network	Cabot Village Store	CVTNOW Central Vermont
Actors Theatre	Capstone Community	chapter National
Another Way	Action	Organization for Women
Arlington Food Shelf, Inc.	Cathedral Square	Deacons of the Episcopal
Aunt Dot's Place	Centre Congregational	Diocese of Vermont
Barre Congregational	Church	Disability Rights Vermont
Church	Champlain Islands	Downstreet Housing and
Bethany Bowl Free	Foodshelf	Community Development
Community Meal	Champlain Valley Office of	Duxbury Elf Food Shelf
Bethany United Church of	Economic Opportunity	East Calais Community
Christ	Christ Episcopal Church,	Trust
BHA/Meals on Wheels of	Montpelier	Edible Brattleboro
Central VT.	Colchester Community Food	Episcopal Deacons of
Brandon Area Food	Shelf	Vermont
Shelf/Brandon Senior	Community College of	Feeding Chittenden
Citizens Center	Vermont - Winooski	Feeding The Valley Alliance
Brattleboro Housing	Community Development	First Presbyterian Church of
Partnerships	Community of Vermont	Barre
Burke Senior Meal Site	Elders	Food Connects
Burlington Children's space	Cornerstone Restaurant	Franklin Grand Isle
Burlington Housing	Group	Community Action/CVOEO
Authority		Full Ladle Community Meal,
Butch + Babe's		Montpelier

Good Samaritan Haven
Grandmas Spanish kitchen
Greater Bennington
Interfaith Community
Services, Inc. (GBICS)
Green Mountain United
Way
Groundworks Collaborative
Guilford Cares, Inc.
HANDS (Helping and
Nourishing Diverse Seniors)
Hinesburg Food Shelf
Holland Food Bank.
Abenaki Helping Abenaki
Nulhegan Abenaki
The Hunger Councils of
Vermont
Hunger Free Vermont
Hunger Mountain Co-op
Jay Foodshelf
John Graham Housing &
Services
Lamoille Community Food
Share
Lamoille Community House
Lamoille Family Center
Lamoille Health & Human
Services Resource
Command Center
Lamoille Health Partners
Laraway Backpack Program
Laraway School
Listen Community Services
Little Rivers Health Care,
Inc.
MARK BBQ / Everyone Eats
Milton Family Community
Center
Montgomery United
Methodist Church Food
Pantry
NEKCA
New Community Project
Northeast Kingdom Council
on Aging

Northeast Kingdom Human
Services Inc.
Ottawaquechee Health
Foundation
Our Place Drop-In Center
Pine Forest Children's
Center
Pingala Café
Putney Foodshelf
Randolph Area Community
Development Corporation
Randolph Area Food Shelf
Reading/West Windsor
Food Shelf
Red Panda Essex
Richmond Community
Kitchen
Richmond Food Shelf
Richmond Food Shelf and
Thrift Store
Roxbury Food Shelf
Rutland Free Clinic
Screamin' Ridge Farm, Inc
ShareMRV
Sheffield Food Pantry
Showing Up for Racial
Justice, Middlebury
SNA-VT
South Royalton Health
Center
Southeastern Vermont
Community Action (SEVCA)
Spectrum Youth and Family
Services
Springfield Family Center,
Inc.
St. Augustine Free
Community Lunch
St. Paul's Episcopal Church,
Vergennes, VT
Sustainable Woodstock
Sweet Alchemy
The DREAM Program
The Giving Fridge

The Health Center,
Plainfield
The Intervale
Center/Vermont Everyone
Eats
The OVERLOOK CAFE
The Rutland Salvation Army
Community Center
The Salvation Army
The Skinny Pancake +
ShiftMeals
The Veterans' Place Inc.
The Woods Lodge
Thetford Food Shelf
Tomorrow's Builders
Townshend Community
Food Shelf
UCM Monday Community
Lunch
United Way of Northwest
Vermont
Vermont 211
Vermont Affordable
Housing Coalition
Vermont Early Childhood
Advocacy Alliance
Vermont Foodbank
Vermont Legal Aid, Inc.
Vermont Low Income
Advocacy Council
Vital Communities
Voices for Vermont's
Children
VT Episcopal Deacons
VT Works for Women
Waterbury Area Senior
Center
Westgate Housing Inc.
Williamstown Food Shelf
Winooski Housing
Authority SASH
Wolcott United Methodist
Church
Worcester Food Shelf
Zenbarn