



The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
United States Senate  
332 Dirksen Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) Request for Feed Every Need

Dear Senator Sanders:

On behalf of Capstone Community Action, serving Washington, Lamoille and Orange counties, I am writing this letter to express our full support for Feed Every Need's CDS request. Feed Every Need's initiative to provide ready-made meals to low-income families in rural communities is necessary and we enthusiastically endorse their efforts.

Our agency has partnered with Feed Every Need since the pandemic, and they have been responsible for stocking our freezer in our Lamoille County office with nutritious ready-to-heat meals for our homeless and food-insecure clients over the past few years. These meals have served as a lifeline for families lacking access to cooking facilities or facing financial constraints, enabling them to allocate their limited financial resources to other necessities such as shelter or transportation.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, there has been a dramatic reduction in congregate meals prepared by older Vermonters in faith-based or other community settings. As an agency, we adapted to this change by providing more meals prepared by our Community Kitchen Academy students and staff to our food pantry. However, the demand surpassed our capacity, so we have relied on Feed Every Need to fill this gap in services.

The pandemic-related resources such as increased TANF dollars, rent subsidies, expanded child tax credit, Everyone Eats program, and enhanced unemployment benefits were a short-lived but telling experiment in what can happen when we expand the social service safety net. We learned that when families have money to spend and save, they prioritize essentials, like food from the grocery store. During the two years of pandemic supports, we saw a more than 50% decrease in the number of people who used our food shelf. Fast forward two years, when it's "back to normal" and we are experiencing a 200% increase in the number of families and visits to our food shelf. Inflation, continued high cost of food at the grocery store, and groceries being one of the family budget items that can be cut without a late fee or eviction notice, it's no surprise that we are spending 45% more on food this year than last to meet the growing demand at our shelf. Partners like Feed Every Need allow us to provide more than just basics in our Morrisville office—they provide nutritious meals ready to heat for our neediest families.

Thank you for considering Feed Every Need as you review applications for your CDS for Vermont.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Liz Scharf".

Liz Scharf

Director of Community Economic Development and Food Security  
Capstone Community Action|20 Gable Place|Barre, VT 05641