

MAKE HUNGER HISTORY.

The Make Hunger History Coalition represents over 200 organizations and over 750 individual members. Together, we imagine a Massachusetts where no family goes hungry, where every child has access to nourishing food, and where hunger is a thing of the past. This vision is within our reach, and Massachusetts is poised to lead the nation in ending food insecurity once and for all.

We believe our State Legislature plays a key role. As such, we solicited all who were not unopposed to answer the following questions.

Name:	Erika Uytterhoeven
Party:	Democratic
District:	2nd Middlesex
Position Sought:	State Senator
Website:	electerika.com

What is your connection to or experience with hunger, food security, federal nutrition programs, or the food system, if any?

Candidate Answer: I grew up as the daughter of an immigrant single mother who worked as a flight attendant, and I understand what it means when a family has to stretch a paycheck across groceries, utilities, and everything else at the end of the month. That experience drives my work in the legislature, and my record reflects it: over three terms I fought to make universal free school meals permanent, fought for HIP funding that now stands at \$29.7 million, and secured state funding for Groundwork Somerville's food and climate education programs. In recent budgets, I received funding for the Somerville Mobile Farmers Market that provides produce sourced from local farms and priced affordably to make healthy, fresh food accessible to all. I championed cottage food reform through H.140 and cosponsored the Healthy Soils and Farm Resiliency amendments because our farmers need real investment from the state. With federal cuts to SNAP and TEFAP now pushing food insecurity to a record 40 percent of Massachusetts households, I will bring that record and that urgency to the Senate to fight for a food system that serves families and farmers across Massachusetts.

What do you believe is the role of the state government in ensuring everyone in our state has enough to eat and reducing the demand for emergency food resources?

Candidate Answer: *The state's role is to make sure no one in Massachusetts needs a food bank to feed their family, and that starts with treating hunger as a symptom of economic insecurity. When 40 percent of households are food insecure despite our investments in universal school meals, HIP, and emergency food assistance, the data tells us that the emergency food system cannot solve what housing costs, inadequate wages, and unaffordable healthcare create. The state must defend and expand those programs, especially as federal cuts to SNAP and TEFAP shift more responsibility to Massachusetts, and must invest in DTA caseworkers so every resident who qualifies for SNAP can actually access it. And the state must fight the root causes that drive families to food banks in the first place: I have fought to lower housing costs by fighting for rent control and passed the broker fee ban into law, and I will bring that same approach to the Senate. We will not end hunger in Massachusetts without making housing, healthcare, utilities, and economic stability accessible to every family across the Commonwealth.*

What should the Commonwealth do to ensure robust access to effective anti-hunger programs such as SNAP?

Candidate Answer: *The 77 percent call failure rate and the loss of 190,000 SNAP recipients in a single year are the same crisis: administrative barriers are pushing families off the program. Massachusetts must hire more DTA caseworkers so families can reach someone when they call, modernize intake and recertification so no one loses SNAP benefits over a paperwork failure, and fight the federal cost-share rules and eligibility restrictions that are squeezing the program from the other side. The FY27 budget cut DTA caseworker funding by \$21 million at the worst possible moment, and in the Senate I will fight to reverse that because when a family churns off SNAP, nine meals disappear for every one a food bank can replace. No one who qualifies for SNAP should lose it because they could not get through to a caseworker, and the Commonwealth must treat SNAP administration as the core infrastructure it is.*

As a member of the Massachusetts legislature, would you advocate for state funds to hire the staff necessary to ensure every eligible low-income resident successfully accesses federally-funded nutrition benefits?

Candidate Answer: *Yes, and I will fight for this in the Senate because investing in DTA staff is how the state protects families and federal dollars. Massachusetts has a 12.5 percent SNAP error rate, and under new federal rules states above 6 percent will owe a share of benefit costs starting in 2027, which means understaffing DTA does not save money: it costs the Commonwealth hundreds of millions in federal penalties. The FY27 budget moved in the wrong direction by cutting \$21 million from DTA caseworker funding, and I will fight for the Senate to restore and expand that investment in every budget I vote on. Every eligible resident who cannot reach a caseworker represents federal nutrition dollars that should be feeding families and supporting local farms and grocers across Massachusetts, and the state must fund the staff to make sure those dollars reach the people they belong to.*

While hunger is a statewide issue that impacts a variety of demographics, certain populations experience it at disproportionately higher rates. For example, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, immigrants, members of LGBTQ+ community, and people with disabilities experience hunger at disproportionately higher rates.

What do you believe are the primary factors driving these disparities, and what can government do to reduce them?

Candidate Answer: *The primary drivers of these disparities are not gaps in food policy: they are the systems of economic marginalization that push communities of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+ residents, and people with disabilities to the margins of housing and employment and healthcare simultaneously. Immigrants avoid SNAP and WIC because accessing benefits can make them visible to immigration enforcement, LGBTQ+ youth face food insecurity downstream of family rejection and homelessness, and people with disabilities face fixed incomes that cannot keep up with rising food costs. The state must protect immigrant communities from the chilling effect of federal enforcement and fund DTA language access and disability accommodations. I passed the broker fee ban and fought against the warrantless data purchases that target immigrant*



communities, and I will bring that fight to the Senate because we will not close the hunger gap without closing the economic and civil rights gaps that create it.

What else would you like to share about your plans to address food insecurity and its root causes?

Candidate Answer: As an antitrust economist, I understand that rising food prices reflect market concentration in the food and grocery industry, and the state must invest in local alternatives. I co-founded Act on Mass and led the campaign that won public disclosure of all legislative committee votes, and that structural reform matters for food policy because for years anti-hunger bills have died in secret committee votes with no accountability to the families and farmers and communities most affected. The FARM omnibus bill that passed the Senate unanimously includes food literacy and local food system investments that I will champion in the Senate and fight to fund. In the Senate I will bring that inside-outside organizing approach to every fight on this questionnaire: more DTA caseworkers, stronger HIP funding, protection for immigrant communities, and the economic policies that make food security possible for everyone across the Commonwealth.