

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.

Our representatives in Congress play a key role. As such, we solicited answer to the following questions.

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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 food insecure. My family fled an authoritarian regime and arrived here in Massachusetts with only \$100 and a few suitcases. My parents worked multiple jobs, but they still struggled to make rent and put food on the table. I remember standing in line at a food pantry when we simply did not have enough to make ends meet. That experience has stayed with me throughout my life.

I am deeply grateful for the food assistance and community programs that helped my family gain our footing and build a better life. Those programs were not a handout. They were a bridge to stability and an investment in my family and in my future. That belief has shaped my professional and public service. As a legal aid attorney, I represented vulnerable clients, including low wage workers, survivors of domestic violence, immigrants, and veterans. I helped people navigate red tape and access benefits and resources, including SNAP, so they could afford food and other basic necessities. I saw firsthand how difficult it can be for families to access programs that are supposed to be there to help them, and how transformative that assistance can be when people are able to get it. As a state representative, I have continued this work through the Food System Caucus and by advocating for policies that help families across Massachusetts access nutritious food. Massachusetts has made important investments, including

universal free school meals for K through 12 students, the Healthy Incentives Program, which helps SNAP households purchase locally grown produce, and funding that allows food banks to purchase food. These investments matter, but the need remains enormous. There are more than 1,000 community food assistance organizations across Massachusetts, including food pantries served by our four regional food banks. These organizations are doing everything they can to meet rising demand, but food banks and pantries are not a long term solution to hunger. In 2025, according to the Greater Boston Food Bank, 40 percent of Massachusetts households experienced food insecurity.

If elected to Congress, I will bring both my lived experience and my years of advocacy to the fight against hunger. I will work to protect and strengthen SNAP and other federal nutrition programs, expand access to healthy and nutritious food, and ensure that children do not have to learn or grow while hungry. I will also fight to protect the funding that supports food banks and community organizations while recognizing that emergency food assistance must complement, not replace, strong federal programs that prevent hunger in the first place. I want to build a food system that supports families, farmers, workers, and local communities, while making sure that no one has to choose between paying the rent and putting food on the table.

My family was able to build a better life because people and programs were there for us when we needed them. I carry that gratitude with me, and it is a major reason I believe so strongly that government should be there for every family who needs a helping hand. No child should have to stand in a food pantry line because their parents cannot afford dinner. No family should have to navigate a maze of red tape to access food assistance. And no one should have to wonder whether they will have enough to eat. In Congress, I will fight to make sure that the same opportunity my family received is available to every family in Massachusetts and across the country.

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

Candidate Answer: *Having visited community pillars like The Open Door in Gloucester, The Salem Pantry, and Neighbors in Need in Andover, I've seen the incredible work local pantries do every single day. But emergency food organizations were built to fill temporary gaps, not to replace a functioning social safety net. The federal government must step up and treat hunger as the preventable public health and economic crisis it is.*

First, Washington must protect and modernize core nutrition safety nets. That means raising baseline SNAP benefits to reflect the true cost of living in high-cost regions like the North Shore and Merrimack Valley, streamlining enrollment for low-income and immigrant working families, and expanding WIC. Next, the federal government should follow Massachusetts' lead by nationalizing Universal School Meals, ensuring every public school student receives two nutritious meals a day so no child goes hungry in the classroom.

Finally, we must attack hunger at its root by treating food as healthcare and building working-class economic stability. I believe the federal government should expand "Food is Medicine" programs through Medicare and Medicaid, funding produce prescriptions to improve health outcomes and reduce diet-related illness. Above all, we must relieve the financial squeeze on families by restoring the expanded Child Tax Credit, raising the federal minimum wage, and lowering everyday costs for housing and healthcare so working parents can afford to keep nutritious food on the table without relying on emergency pantries.

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

Candidate Answer: *Congress has a clear responsibility to modernize, fund, and protect SNAP so that state agencies can function efficiently rather than serving as a bottleneck for hungry families. First, Congress must eliminate administrative red tape and modernize eligibility interview rules. Under current federal guidelines, rigid recertification and interview requirements trap families and overwhelm state call centers, leading to overwhelming backlogs and burdensome bureaucratic barriers to accessing basic necessities. Congress should pass federal legislation, such as the SNAP Recertification Reform Act, to allow state agencies greater*

flexibility to streamline or waive redundant phone interviews for low-risk renewals. We must also permanently allow continuous multi-year coverage for stable-income households, like seniors and people with disabilities, so caseworkers can focus their time on urgent initial applications and complex cases rather than processing repetitive annual paperwork.

Second, Washington must invest directly in state administrative infrastructure and technology. When federal mandates push states to process endless reporting requirements without supplying matching funds for caseworker staffing and modern call center technology, service collapses. Congress needs to expand federal administrative funding grants specifically targeted at upgrading state IT systems, deploying modern call-backs, and hiring and retaining front-line caseworkers to bring hold times down, and ensure everyone who calls in, gets a call back.

Finally, Congress must defend SNAP from harmful benefit cuts and harsh reporting requirements. Congress must protect baseline benefits, raise income limits to match the high cost of living in places like Massachusetts, and ensure that applying for food assistance is straightforward, accessible, and dignified.

As a member of Congress, would you advocate to ensure every eligible household is able to receive SNAP with minimal bureaucratic hurdles?

Candidate Answer: Absolutely. SNAP is one of the purest examples of what good government can do for people. It is nothing short of life-saving. Every eligible person and home should receive this public assistance if they need it, for as long as they need it, with minimal wait times and streamlined processing. I understand the interest in vetting folks signing up for these programs, but we are limiting the amount of good we can do when we create overly complex processes for entry.

Would you advocate for SNAP eligibility or benefits amounts to be expanded?

Candidate Answer: Yes, I support both expanding SNAP eligibility and increasing benefit amounts. Growing up in a working-class immigrant family where every dollar mattered, I know SNAP is a vital, dignified lifeline. But the current program

relies on outdated formulas that fail to reflect the high cost of living families face today in Massachusetts.

In Congress, I will fight to increase base benefit amounts and recalculate allotment models so that benefits reflect the actual cost of nutritious food in high-cost regions like the North Shore and Merrimack Valley, rather than relying on outdated national averages. I will also push to raise income eligibility limits to eliminate situations where a modest raise strips away essential support, and remove harsh administrative barriers that unfairly bar college students, low-wage workers, and immigrant families from accessing food assistance. SNAP should be a safety net, but also a bridge toward economic stability. Just because someone is not starving does not mean they are having their food and nutrition needs met, and we need to do better as a society to ensure that we set folks up for success and stability long-term.

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: *Like so many injustices, food insecurity is rooted in systemic economic inequities, generational wealth gaps, and persistent discrimination in housing, healthcare, and employment. Growing up in a working-class immigrant family where we depended on subsidized housing and stood in line at food pantries, I know firsthand how language barriers, fear and mistrust of government, confusing red tape, discrimination in access to benefits, a lack of generational wealth or access to high-paying jobs compound to keep food out of reach.*

Government must take direct, targeted action to dismantle these structural barriers. We must work to remove administrative red tape by simplifying SNAP and WIC enrollment, permanently expand multi-language support, and eliminate

punitive work reporting rules that disproportionately harm workers with disabilities and immigrants. We also need to invest in economic support that can help folks build a life beyond government assistance. We can do this by restoring the expanded Child Tax Credit, raising the federal minimum wage, and federalizing programs like Massachusetts' Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) so families can buy fresh, culturally preferred produce directly from local farmers. Beyond this changes, it is also our duty to attack the root causes of poverty by investing in deeply affordable housing, expanding rental assistance, and protecting and subsidizing health coverage as we work towards Medicare for All, so families have their other baseline physical needs met, in addition to access to food.

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

Candidate Answer: I believe we cannot fully address hunger without addressing the economic conditions that cause families to go hungry in the first place. My own family's experience taught me that lesson. My parents worked multiple jobs after we arrived in Massachusetts, but there were still times when their wages were not enough to cover rent and put food on the table. I know firsthand that working hard is not always enough when wages are too low and the cost of basic necessities keeps rising.

In Congress, I will fight to raise wages and strengthen worker protections so that people who work hard can afford to support themselves and their families. My experience as a legal aid attorney representing low wage workers also showed me how wage theft, unstable employment, and other workplace abuses can push families into crisis. Workers should not have to choose between speaking up about workplace violations and being able to afford their next meal.

Housing costs are another major driver of food insecurity. When too much of a family's income goes toward rent or a mortgage, food is often one of the first things that gets sacrificed. I will work to expand affordable housing, protect tenants, and address the rising cost of housing so that families are not forced to choose between keeping a roof over their heads and putting food on the table.

I also believe we cannot have true food security if immigrant families are afraid to seek help. As someone who came to this country as a child after my family fled an authoritarian regime, I know how much courage it takes to build a new life in a new country. No family should be afraid to access food assistance or other basic services because of their immigration status or fear of government enforcement. I will fight to protect immigrant families from policies that create fear and prevent eligible people from accessing the resources they need.

For me, addressing hunger means building an economy where people can earn enough to live, afford a safe and stable home, and access support without fear. My family was able to build a better life because people and institutions were there for us when we needed them. I want to make sure that same opportunity exists for every family.