

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:	Clinton Graham
Party:	Democratic
District:	7th Norfolk
Position Sought:	State Representative
Website:	GrahamForRep.com

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

Candidate Answer: My connection to hunger and food security is deeply personal. In 2009, after my mother passed away, I found myself in need of support while searching for employment. Reluctantly, I turned to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), overcoming the stigma because I truly needed the help. This experience highlighted the critical role of federal nutrition programs in providing dignity and support during tough times. As a former football player and fitness enthusiast, I understand the importance of access to quality, nutritious food. I am committed to advocating for higher food quality standards, inspired by countries like Europe and Japan, to improve the quality of life for all families in 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 government plays a crucial role in ensuring that everyone in Massachusetts has access to sufficient food and in reducing the reliance on emergency food resources. This begins with strengthening and

expanding existing programs, such as providing free school meals for all K-12 students and enhancing the Healthy Incentives Program to increase access to local produce for SNAP households. Additionally, the state should invest in sustainable, long-term solutions to food insecurity by supporting community food systems, increasing funding for food banks, and promoting policies that address the root causes of hunger, such as poverty and unemployment. By prioritizing comprehensive policies and investments, the state can move beyond temporary fixes and work towards a future where all residents have access to nutritious food.

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

Candidate Answer: To ensure robust access to anti-hunger programs like SNAP, the Commonwealth should focus on improving communication and access by increasing staffing at the Department of Transitional Assistance and implementing efficient call-back systems. This will help reduce wait times for residents needing to speak with caseworkers. Additionally, leveraging technology by enhancing online and mobile platforms can simplify applications and renewals, reducing the need for in-person or phone interactions. Expanding outreach and education efforts, particularly for vulnerable populations, can increase awareness and access to benefits. Partnering with community organizations can further assist in these efforts. Lastly, advocating for policies that address rising food costs and adjust benefit levels to reflect current economic realities is crucial. By addressing these areas, Massachusetts can strengthen SNAP's effectiveness and ensure more residents have access to necessary nutrition.

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, I would advocate for state funds to hire the necessary staff to ensure that every eligible low-income resident can successfully access federally-funded nutrition benefits. Investing in adequate staffing is essential to

streamline the process and reduce barriers, ensuring that residents receive the support they need efficiently. By doing so, we can maximize the impact of federal programs like SNAP and effectively address food insecurity in our communities.

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 factors driving these disparities include systemic inequalities, such as income inequality, discrimination, and lack of access to resources like education and healthcare. Historical and ongoing discrimination has limited opportunities for many marginalized communities, leading to higher rates of poverty and food insecurity. To reduce these disparities, the government can focus on implementing policies that promote equity and inclusion. This includes investing in affordable housing, improving access to quality education, and expanding healthcare services. Additionally, targeted outreach and support for marginalized communities can help ensure they have access to nutrition programs. By addressing the root causes of inequality, we can work towards reducing hunger and creating a more equitable society.

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

Candidate Answer: In addressing food insecurity, I plan to focus on both immediate support and long-term solutions that tackle the root causes. One innovative approach is to provide funding and incentives for community gardening and growing your own food. This not only empowers individuals and communities but also promotes self-sufficiency and access to fresh produce. Implementing food credits and financial support for these initiatives can make them accessible to more people.

Additionally, combining gardening efforts with exercise incentives and subsidies for purchasing healthy food can have a profound impact. By encouraging healthier lifestyles, we can improve public health outcomes, which in turn can lead to cost savings in the healthcare system. To support these initiatives, we might consider implementing a modest tax on junk food, which could help fund these programs and further promote healthier choices. Through these combined efforts, we can create a sustainable and comprehensive strategy to combat food insecurity and promote overall well-being.

To truly address food insecurity, we must think creatively and compassionately. Imagine a Massachusetts where community gardens flourish, empowering individuals to grow their own nutritious food and fostering a sense of self-reliance and community spirit. By offering funding and incentives for these initiatives, we can make fresh produce accessible to all, while also encouraging healthier lifestyles through exercise incentives and subsidies for purchasing wholesome foods. This holistic approach not only enhances public health but also reduces healthcare costs, benefiting everyone.

Furthermore, we have an incredible opportunity to address hunger by partnering with supermarkets and restaurants. Instead of discarding surplus food, they can contribute to a daily collection program, ensuring that perfectly good food reaches those in need the same day or shortly after. By loosening restrictive policies and implementing this program swiftly, we can ensure that no resident in Massachusetts goes hungry. Together, through these innovative and compassionate strategies, we can create a brighter, healthier future for all.