

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:	Neil Miller
Party:	Democratic
District:	26th Middlesex
Position Sought:	State Representative
Website:	NeilMillerMA.com

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

Candidate Answer: Food security is a deep personal concern to me. Relatives who grew up during the Depression recounted going to bed hungry, and I'm committed to making sure no neighbors today have the same experience. Close family members have utilized SNAP to pay for groceries - that support ensured that they did not just eat, but could purchase fresh, nutritious food. For a family member who immigrated from Russia, SNAP helped her get groceries from the Eastern European supermarket. Besides supporting a cherished local business, SNAP helped her maintain her sense of identity while living in Boston. My professional interest in protecting and expanding SNAP goes back more than a decade. As a volunteer in college, I worked inside community health centers on the South Side of Chicago helped eligible families enroll in SNAP. Just like doctors prescribe medication for an infection, access to nutritious food can help boost a community's health. After college, supporting an academic study on how environmental determinants of health impact the well-being of medically vulnerable infants, I mapped food access in 4 major American cities, My wife worked in the public benefits unit of Greater Boston Legal Services at the beginning of the pandemic, and I saw directly how arbitrary rules made by legislators or agency officials could cruelly keep families away from vital

programs like SNAP. Working under the Biden administration as a U.S. government data scientist, I helped simplify rules and application procedures to improve access to SNAP. Even after leaving the U.S. government, I wrote about the challenges Massachusetts state government has faced trying to create a 'common app', leaving many families who are eligible for SNAP from enjoying the program's benefits: <https://www.dotnews.com/2025/06/04/let-s-get-moving-common-app-public-benefits/>

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: At a time when food assistance programs like SNAP - and support to pantries - is being cut by D.C. Republicans, the state of Massachusetts needs to prioritize food access. State government should provide direct support to pantries and other venues - like schools - where we can help our neighbors get great meals. We should ensure that SNAP and HIP benefits aren't cut, so that families have the ability to buy the food they want to buy, This includes increasing state funding, if federal funds fall short. Finally, while the federal law HR1 tries to drown beneficiaries in paperwork to take away benefits like SNAP, we need to be doing everything we can to make state-administered, federally funded programs like SNAP easy to access in Massachusetts. This includes hiring sufficient caseworkers at the DTA, simplifying forms, delivering a 'common app,' revisiting rules (like phone interviews) that add administrative burden, and measuring customer experience in the application process.

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

Candidate Answer: I have spent my career make sure that government actually delivers on its promises. We need to expand eligibility and increase the size of monthly benefits. Beyond that, we need to make sure that everyone eligible for SNAP can and does access SNAP. This includes hiring sufficient caseworkers at the DTA, simplifying forms, delivering a 'common app,' revisiting rules (like phone

interviews) that add administrative burden, and measuring customer experience in the application process.

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. Properly funding DTA operations - and especially front-line staffing - is a top priority for me. As MLRI reported, this year's MA House budget did not sufficiently fund DTA caseworkers (item 4400-1100). This leads to low-income residents who are already strapped for time spending hours calling and re-calling the DTA. Additionally, with HR1 tying federal funding to payment error rates, underinvesting in staff can increase errors, so that we potentially lose out in \$300 million in federal food assistance. Cutting DTA staff provides very little in short-term savings, but risks long-term costs in nutritional losses and forfeited federal funds.

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: Food security is connected with economic and racial justice. Historic and present-day inequality make it harder for many neighbors to get jobs that treat employees with dignity and pay them fairly. Underinvestment in many Massachusetts neighborhoods, due to redlining and suburban flight, mean that POC and immigrants who live in these communities have to travel farther to get good groceries. And since food is closely tied with community, LGBTQ+ neighbors, people with disabilities, and anyone stigmatized by others can be isolated and forced to deal with hunger on their own.

Food programs like SNAP, HIP, and school meals disproportionately help the groups mentioned, and are important to protect and expand when vulnerable communities face political attacks. Beyond that, we need to grow the economy and stand up for workers' rights, in order to end poverty and tackle growing wealth inequality. We need to ensure that communities which have historically faced underinvestment can thrive - and that old and new residents alike see the benefits of new investment. Finally, the government needs to strengthen and enforce anti-discrimination laws, to ensure that none of our neighbors are being excluded from the community because of their race, ethnicity, disability status, or sexual orientation.

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

Candidate Answer: The #1 issue driving my campaign is the price of housing. After helping Cambridge move forward 1000+ new affordable homes and overturn a century of exclusionary zoning, I'm running to make sure that everyone in Massachusetts can find a home they can afford.

Housing stability is closely linked with food insecurity. If the rent is too high, households are pushed to cut their grocery bill, putting their health and well-being at risk. Exclusionary zoning rules and the shortage of affordable housing in every community keeps families who would want to move trapped in food deserts. And displacement from never-ending rent increases can sever a family's ties to their neighbors and access to the stores they're familiar with, making it harder to eat well.

To build 200,000 new homes and address our housing shortage, I will push to end exclusionary zoning rules statewide and fund affordable housing. By ensuring there are homes that are affordable to everyone who wants to build their future in Massachusetts, we can also ensure food security for every family.