

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:	Ravi Simon
Party:	Democratic
District:	13th Middlesex
Position Sought:	State Representative
Website:	ravisimon.com

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

Candidate Answer: I have been fortunate to never experience food insecurity myself. My parents taught me from a young age that when you have that kind of privilege, you should use it to support people who are less fortunate.

My first real experience with food insecurity was volunteering at Open Table in Maynard, a food pantry and meal site. I volunteered there for about seven years growing up.

In my professional life, I have had the opportunity to support those on the front lines of addressing food insecurity. At the Commonwealth's largest human services trade group, I supported community-based nonprofits in the food system by advocating for greater state support for the sector and better compensation for its staff.

As an aide to Rep. Carmine Gentile, I helped him advocate strongly for restoring benefits under the Healthy Incentives Program, assisted constituents with benefit applications, and am proud to have helped him secure funding that was essential to our local food pantry in Sudbury finding a new, far superior home.

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: *Food insecurity is of course tied up with other issues including the cost of living crisis, homelessness, addiction, refugee immigration etc. Nonetheless, it is simply a societal choice to allocate our resources so inequitably that 40% of families face food insecurity. It's a choice we should stop making. HIP, food bank funding, and free school meals have all been enormously worthwhile investments. We have been able to fund profoundly important programs such as free school meals, fare-free RTA service, and free community college by levying a small tax of 4 cents on every dollar after your first million dollars of income. We should continue to find ways to raise progressive revenues to fund important programs that address food insecurity, or its root causes. I also think government has a critical role in creating and maintaining an economy in which people can live. Many people are food insecure because they face a choice between paying their medical debt, covering their energy bill, and a trip to the grocery store. By acting aggressively to lower costs across the board, and raising the minimum wage to benefit the lowest earners, we can reduce food insecurity substantially.*

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

Candidate Answer: *I would like to see the Commonwealth fund caseworkers, and to the extent feasible in the budget, supplement SNAP benefits. I am also open to any other solutions, and hope to learn more about what is being proposed by the groups and people on the front lines of this issue.*

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.*

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: Hunger is a byproduct of poverty, inequality, and the cost of living. These issues affect historically marginalized communities the most - a legacy of discrimination. Government must both act to invest and lift up these communities, and to focus additional resources to those communities to combat food insecurity.

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

Candidate Answer: The housing crisis is the single biggest economic issue facing Massachusetts. If we can make housing more affordable, it would leave a lot more room in people's budgets for food. I'd like to see more market rate housing development, more affordable housing, and further tenant protections such as rent stabilization. There is much evidence to show that people have a much easier time finding employment, staying sober, and tackling other major issues if they can just keep a roof over their head.

I am also a big believer that we need to provide healthy, local food options to people. My district has many local farms, some of which provide produce for local pantries, and I would like to see they are supported by state government, whether through funding or otherwise.