

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:	Stephen Medeiros
Party:	Democratic
District:	9th Bristol
Position Sought:	State Representative
Website:	electstevemedeiros.com

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

Candidate Answer: *My commitment to fighting hunger is rooted in my community involvement on the South Coast and my daily work helping local families achieve economic stability. As a youth, I volunteered at various soup kitchens through my church youth group. In college, I volunteered for Community Servings in Boston and continued to volunteer for several years after college. Earlier in my civic life, I served as President of 'Sharing a Blessing' Soup Kitchen (2010–2012), where I saw firsthand the harsh realities of hunger facing our neighbors, working parents, and seniors. I would often drive to the Boston Foodbank to get food and also network with local businesses to receive food donations for the soup kitchen. Through my ongoing work with the Boys & Girls Club of New Bedford, Knights of Columbus, and local youth athletics, I see how critical daily, reliable nutrition is to childhood development and family stability. Professionally, as a REALTOR® and housing advocate, I work every day with working-class families navigating the crushing cost of living in Massachusetts. When housing costs swallow 50% or more of a household's income, the grocery budget is almost always the first thing that gets squeezed. Furthermore, as a life long resident of the 9th Bristol District—which encompasses both Dartmouth's rich agricultural fields and New Bedford's world-class commercial fishing fleet—*

gives me a direct, pragmatic perspective on our local food economy from producer to table.

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: State government must act as an efficient, reliable safety net and a catalyst for economic stability—not a passive observer. While our emergency food network of pantries and food banks does heroic work, relying on charitable food as a primary strategy is unsustainable.

The state's role should focus on three clear pillars:

Strengthening direct access to federal and state benefits: Programs like universal K-12 school meals, SNAP, and the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) must be fully funded, streamlined, and protected against mid-year benefit cliffs.

Investing in regional supply chains: By directly connecting state-funded food purchasing with local producers—such as Dartmouth farms and New Bedford fishers—we build a resilient regional food system while keeping dollars circulating in our local economy.

Tackling core affordability: The ultimate key to reducing the demand for emergency pantries is stabilizing the overall cost of living. That means pursuing practical policies that expand housing supply, reduce energy overhead, and allow working families to retain more of their hard-earned paychecks.

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

Candidate Answer: It is completely unacceptable that families in crisis face bureaucratic brick walls when trying to access federal nutrition benefits they are legally entitled to receive. To fix this, the Commonwealth must:

Modernize and streamline the administrative process: Upgrade DTA's IT and telecommunications infrastructure to reduce dropped calls, integrate online self-service portals, and simplify recertification procedures so families aren't dropped due to paperwork delays.

Ensure full language accessibility: In diverse communities like New Bedford and the South Coast, non-English speakers face double the burden when navigating benefit systems. We must mandate multi-lingual customer support and simplified application forms.

Leverage cross-agency data matching: Automatically cross-enroll eligible residents receiving MassHealth, fuel assistance, or school meal programs into SNAP to reduce administrative drag for both applicants and state workers.

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. Investing state funds into DTA caseworkers and operational staffing is a common-sense, high-return investment. Federal SNAP dollars are 100% federally funded food benefits—every dollar we bring into Massachusetts goes directly into our local grocery stores, bodegas, and farm stands, spurring local economic activity. Funding adequate frontline staffing pays for itself by drawing down federal aid, reducing emergency healthcare costs, and relieving the strain on overburdened local food pantries.

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: These disparities are driven by systemic economic barriers, language access hurdles, structural wage gaps, and historical inequities in capital access and housing.

Black, Indigenous, & People of Color: Face persistent wealth gaps and historical underinvestment leading to local food deserts.

People with Disabilities: Face fixed incomes and physical or transit barriers alongside high medical costs.

LGBTQ+ Individuals: Face higher risks of housing and job instability, particularly among youth and seniors.

In Gateway Cities like New Bedford, vibrant immigrant and minority communities—such as our Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and Central American residents—form the backbone of our seafood processing, agricultural, and service workforces, yet often face the highest rates of food insecurity.

To reduce these disparities, state government must:

Break Down Language & Administrative Barriers: Ensure full multi-lingual support, clear translation, and culturally competent outreach for all DTA and nutrition programs.

Improve Physical & Transit Access: Partner with regional transit to improve access to mobile markets, pantries, and SNAP retailers for individuals with mobility challenges.

Invest in Local, Minority-Owned Food Businesses: Provide technical assistance and access to capital for local bodegas, grocers, and food startups in underserved neighborhoods.

Protect Fair Wages & Safety: Support fair pay, workplace protections, and career growth for frontline processing, farm, and service workers who sustain our food system.

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

Candidate Answer: Addressing food insecurity requires a balanced, common-sense approach on Beacon Hill. We cannot tackle hunger in a vacuum—it is deeply tied to housing stability, economic opportunity, and local agricultural sustainability.

On the South Coast, we have a unique opportunity to lead by example. I will advocate for expanding 'Farm-to-School' and 'Sea-to-School' procurement initiatives, ensuring our public school students receive fresh, locally harvested produce and seafood. I will champion liability protections and tax incentives for local businesses that donate surplus edible food, while protecting the farmland and working waterfronts that keep our local food economy strong.

We can be fiercely protective of our vulnerable families, deeply supportive of our local farms and fishing fleets, and completely committed to ending hunger—all while remaining fiscally responsible and focused on economic commonsense.

