

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:	Tara Hong
Party:	Democratic
District:	18th Middlesex
Position Sought:	State Representative
Website:	www.tarahong.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 both personal and professional. Growing up in Lowell, I saw firsthand how many families, including immigrant and low-income households, struggled to put healthy food on the table. Those experiences gave me a deep understanding of how food insecurity affects children's education, families' health, and the overall well-being of a community.

I also know this struggle personally. Growing up, my family depended on food pantries at times to help put food on the table. Those experiences shaped who I am today and strengthened my belief that no one should ever go hungry, regardless of their family background or financial situation.

As a State Representative, I have worked closely with local organizations, food pantries, schools, and community partners to improve access to nutritious food. I have made it a priority to advocate for policies that strengthen food security and support working families.

I have built strong partnerships with organizations such as Mill City Grows and the Merrimack Valley Food Bank, whose work expanding access to fresh, healthy, and locally grown food has made a meaningful difference in Lowell. Through these partnerships and my work in the community, I have seen the critical

importance of federal nutrition programs such as SNAP, WIC, and school meal programs in helping families meet their basic needs.

These experiences have reinforced my belief that access to healthy food is a basic human need. I remain committed to supporting policies and partnerships that reduce hunger, strengthen our communities, and build a more equitable food system for everyone.

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: I believe the state government has a fundamental responsibility to ensure that no one in Massachusetts goes hungry. Access to nutritious food is a basic human need and should never depend on a person's income, ZIP code, or life circumstances.

As a state Rep, I will continue to help ensure that the state's role is to invest in programs and policies that prevent hunger before families reach a crisis. That means strengthening and protecting nutrition programs such as SNAP, WIC, school meals, and summer food programs while also supporting local food banks, food pantries, community farms, and organizations that help families access healthy food with dignity.

We must also address the root causes of food insecurity by expanding affordable housing, creating good-paying jobs, increasing access to childcare, and making healthcare more affordable. When families have stable incomes and lower living costs, they are less likely to need emergency food assistance.

At the same time, the state must continue to partner with community organizations, municipalities, schools, and the federal government to ensure that resources reach the people who need them most. Reducing the demand for emergency food resources requires both immediate support for families facing hunger today and long-term investments that build stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities.

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

Candidate Answer: *The Commonwealth should make it as easy as possible for every eligible resident to access programs like SNAP by simplifying the application and renewal process, reducing barriers, and providing information in multiple languages.*

We must continue to partner with schools, healthcare providers, food pantries, and community organizations to connect families with available resources while continuing to advocate for the federal government to do its part as well. At the same time, we must address the root causes of hunger by investing in affordable housing, good-paying jobs, childcare, and healthcare so fewer families have to rely on emergency food assistance.

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: *The primary factors driving food insecurity are the rising cost of living, unemployment rate, lack of affordable housing, limited access to healthcare and childcare, and systemic inequities that disproportionately affect communities of color, immigrants, seniors, and people with disabilities.*

State Government can help reduce these disparities by expanding access to affordable housing, creating good-paying jobs, strengthening nutrition programs, investing in education and healthcare, and supporting community organizations that work directly with families. By addressing both the immediate need for food assistance and the root causes of poverty, I strongly believe that we can build healthier, stronger, and more equitable communities.



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

Candidate Answer: As I have mentioned, food insecurity is deeply personal to me because I have experienced it firsthand. That is why I am committed to ensuring that no child, family, or senior has to worry about where their next meal will come from.

As a State Representative, I will continue working with local and statewide organizations, schools, food banks, and community partners to expand access to healthy food.