

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.

Our representatives in Congress play a key role. As such, we solicited answer to the following questions.

Name:	John Beccia
Party:	Democratic
District:	Sixth
Website:	becciaforcongress.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 not experienced hunger in my own life, and I am not going to tell you otherwise. Food insecurity is central to this campaign because it is what I keep hearing.

Over the course of this campaign I have visited all 39 cities and towns in this district and people told me the same thing: Groceries are busting household budgets. On May 14, I convened a food insecurity roundtable in Lynn with leaders from 12 of the district's food pantries and hunger relief organizations. And their situation is dire: demand is through the roof, federal support has evaporated, and state caseworkers are overworked.

My career was spent in financial regulation and consumer protection, which is mostly the work of making sure rules serve the people for whom they were written. That is the problem here too. No Empty Shelves came out of those conversations, and it is the first plan in my agenda for a reason.

What do you believe is the role of the federal government in ensuring everyone in our state has enough to eat and reducing the demand for emergency food resources?

Candidate Answer: *The federal government is the only actor operating at the scale of this problem, and right now it is making the problem worse. For every meal an emergency food program provides, SNAP provides nine. Pantries were built to carry a family through a bad month, not a permanent shortfall. This federal funding goes beyond just putting food on shelves, but buoys our entire economy. SNAP also brings roughly \$2.7 billion in federal dollars into Massachusetts every year and moves nearly \$3 billion through more than 5,500 retailers. The federal role has three parts. The first is funding these programs: SNAP, WIC, school meals, summer meals, Meals on Wheels, and the Farm Bill nutrition title. Second is getting the benefit right, so it reflects what a healthy diet actually costs in a state this expensive. And third is to stop manufacturing emergencies, which is why my plan creates an automatic federal backstop so benefits never lapse in a shutdown. Reducing demand on pantries also means going after what causes the shortfall: rent, child care, utility bills, and wages that have not kept up.*

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

Candidate Answer: *First and foremost, repeal the SNAP provisions in last year's reconciliation law. Those provisions mandated work requirements onto adults up to age 64 and onto parents of children as young as 14; stripped the exemptions that protected veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and young people aging out of foster care; limited hardship waivers to areas with unemployment above 10 percent, a bar no state in the country currently clears; and cut off refugees and asylees who were here lawfully. In a single year, more than 150,000 Massachusetts residents lost their SNAP benefits, including tens of thousands of children. This crisis is compounded by the fact that 40 percent of households in the state are already food insecure. These draconian cuts were done in the name of "rooting out fraud," but the reality is that bureaucratic hurdles were created to kick people off of these immensely important programs. Congress also has to pay for what it mandates. Prior to these cuts, the Department of Agriculture covered half of all administrative costs. But the reconciliation bill cut this funding by 50 percent, while also dramatically increasing the reporting workload on an already*

threadbare staff. I would restore the federal match and hold the federal government to real service standards, including language access.

As a member of Congress, would you advocate to ensure every eligible household is able to receive SNAP with minimal bureaucratic hurdles?

Candidate Answer: Yes.

Too many eligible families are going hungry because of red tape. More than 75 percent of Massachusetts callers who need a caseworker never reach one.

Eligibility that exists on paper and not in practice is not eligibility.

What I would push for: longer certification periods; verification through data the government already holds rather than documents families have to chase down; an end to making people prove the same unchanged circumstances every six months; real language access at every step; and administrative funding that matches the complexity Congress writes into the law rather than the cut to the federal match that takes effect in October.

Would you advocate for SNAP eligibility or benefits amounts to be expanded?

Candidate Answer: Yes, both.

Regarding eligibility, the first job is restoring what Congress just took away, meaning the refugees and asylum seekers who were cut off despite being here lawfully, and the older adults and parents of teenagers now caught by work reporting rules that punish people whose hours change week to week. From there, I would expand. In a state where 40 percent of households report food insecurity, an eligibility line that leaves out most of them is drawn in the wrong place.

As for benefits, the amount should be tied to inflation and the real cost of groceries. An average benefit of roughly \$11 a day per household is not near enough to feed a family in my district.

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 gaps are structural. They follow the labor market, the housing market, and the design of the programs themselves, not the choices of the people living inside them.*

Work comes first. Black, Latino, immigrant, and disabled workers are disproportionately concentrated in the jobs that pay least and have variable scheduling. Work reporting rules punish exactly that volatility, because a month at 76 hours instead of 80 becomes a termination notice. Then comes housing and wealth disparities. Basic essentials like food and housing comes first, which takes up a majority of each paycheck. Too many families are living in financially tenuous situations, due to generations of discriminatory housing, lending, and work practices, leaving them no option but to live paycheck-to-paycheck, with nothing to fall back on.

Then status. Congress cut off refugees and asylees who came here legally, and the fear that followed keeps eligible-mixed status families from applying. Then access. Right now, the Department of Transitional Assistance customer service line drops three out of every four calls when the caller needs interpretation. Hundreds of thousands more have disabilities and mobility issues that make simple errands outside the house impossible. LGBTQ+ people, especially trans people and young people pushed out of their homes, face discrimination at work and household rules written for a family that will take them in.

The government's job is to dismantle those barriers, not catalog them. Restore immigrant eligibility, end the work reporting rules, fund staffing and interpretation, enforce civil rights law in how these programs are run, and collect disaggregated data, because a disparity nobody measures is a disparity nobody fixes.

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

Candidate Answer: *Two things.*

No Empty Shelves is one of the signature plans in the North Shore New Deal. It protects SNAP and the Farm Bill nutrition title, reverses the cuts coming out of Washington, creates a federal backstop so benefits never lapse in a shutdown, restores federal support for local food purchasing so food banks can buy from North Shore farms, funds cold storage and regional food hubs, and protects school meals, summer meals, and Meals on Wheels.

And the root causes, because hunger here is a symptom of an affordability crisis. Nobody described their grocery bill to me in isolation. They described it alongside rent, child care, a utility bill, and a paycheck that has not moved in years. The hunger answer and the cost of living answer are the same answer: build housing, make child care affordable, make the expanded Child Tax Credit permanent, guarantee paid family and medical leave, and end the tariffs raising the price of groceries.

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Our representatives in Congress play a key role. As such, we solicited answer to the following questions.

Name:	Dan Koh
Party:	Democratic
District:	Sixth
Website:	www.kohforcongress.com

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

Candidate Answer: My experience with hunger and food security comes primarily through my work in local and federal government and, more recently, through conversations with organizations addressing food insecurity here on the North Shore.

As Chief of Staff to Mayor Marty Walsh, I saw firsthand how local government can help address hunger not simply as an emergency need, but as a question of access, affordability, health, and equity. During our administration, Boston strengthened its focus on food security, including transforming the Mayor's Office of Food Initiatives into the Mayor's Office of Food Access. We worked to expand access to healthy, affordable food, including through Boston Bounty Bucks, which helped families using SNAP stretch their benefits further at farmers markets and the Boston Public Market while supporting local farmers and producers.

I later served as Chief of Staff at the U.S. Department of Labor and in senior roles in the Biden-Harris White House, where I saw the importance of federal programs and strong federal-state-local partnerships in providing families with economic security. I was serving in the White House when the Biden-Harris Administration convened the first White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in

more than 50 years and launched a whole-of-government strategy aimed at ending hunger in America.

More recently, I visited The Salem Pantry and saw firsthand the extraordinary work they are doing to meet rising food insecurity across the North Shore. At a time when demand is growing, federal funding for food assistance has been slashed, leaving organizations like The Salem Pantry to serve more families with fewer resources. That is unacceptable. Food pantries cannot be expected to fill the gaps created when the federal government retreats from its responsibility to fight hunger. In Congress, I will fight against cuts to SNAP and federal nutrition programs, work to restore and strengthen federal investments in emergency food assistance and our local food system, and ensure organizations like The Salem Pantry have a federal partner committed to ending hunger—not making their job harder.

What do you believe is the role of the federal government in ensuring everyone in our state has enough to eat and reducing the demand for emergency food resources?

Candidate Answer: The federal government has a fundamental responsibility to ensure that no family in Massachusetts—or anywhere in America—has to wonder where their next meal will come from. Food banks and community pantries do extraordinary work, but they should be there for emergencies, not serve as a substitute for a strong social safety net and an economy in which working families can afford their basic needs.

One of the most important things Congress can do to reduce hunger is restore the expanded Child Tax Credit. When the expanded credit was in place, it gave families direct, reliable support to pay for groceries, rent, utilities, childcare, and other necessities. It helped lift millions of children out of poverty and reduced food insecurity among families with children. Restoring and making the expanded Child Tax Credit permanent would be one of my top priorities in Congress because no parent should have to choose between putting food on the table and keeping the lights on.

We also need to protect and strengthen SNAP and WIC and ensure that benefits keep pace with what it actually costs to feed a family. We should protect access

to school and summer meals and support programs like Massachusetts' Healthy Incentives Program that help families using SNAP afford fresh, healthy food while supporting local farmers and strengthening our regional food system.

And we have to recognize that hunger is inseparable from the broader affordability crisis. When rent, childcare, energy, and healthcare consume more and more of a family's paycheck, groceries become one of the few expenses families can cut. That is why, alongside restoring the Child Tax Credit, my affordability agenda calls for making childcare available for no more than \$10 a day, helping renters keep housing costs below 30 percent of their income through a renter's tax credit, capping household energy costs at 6 percent of income, and expanding access to primary care.

The fact that 40 percent of Massachusetts households experienced food insecurity in 2025 is unacceptable. We must continue supporting food banks and pantries so they can meet today's urgent need, but our ultimate goal should be reducing the number of families who need emergency food assistance at all. That means using the full power of the federal government to strengthen family economic security, protect nutrition assistance, lower the cost of basic necessities, and make sure every family has enough to eat.

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

Candidate Answer: Congress should protect SNAP from cuts and ensure that every eligible family can actually access the benefits they are entitled to. At a time when families are paying more at the grocery store, we should be making it easier—not harder—for people facing food insecurity to get help.

That means adequately funding SNAP and the state agencies responsible for administering it, modernizing outdated systems, and reducing unnecessary paperwork and administrative barriers that cause eligible families to lose benefits. Congress should also support stronger outreach and enrollment assistance and make it easier for families to maintain their benefits when their circumstances have not changed.

The fact that so many Massachusetts residents cannot reach a caseworker is especially concerning. A benefit only works if people can access it. My experience

at the local and federal levels has taught me that government programs must be designed around the people they serve. Congress should provide states with the resources they need to answer calls, process applications and recertifications promptly, and ensure that administrative failures never become the reason a family goes without food.

As a member of Congress, would you advocate to ensure every eligible household is able to receive SNAP with minimal bureaucratic hurdles?

Candidate Answer: Yes. If a household is eligible for SNAP, unnecessary bureaucracy should never stand between that family and food. I would advocate for simplifying enrollment and recertification, reducing unnecessary paperwork, improving coordination between benefit programs, investing in state administrative capacity, and making it easier for eligible households to get help when they need it. We should also use technology to improve access while maintaining strong phone and in-person options for seniors, people with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, and anyone who may have difficulty navigating an online system. SNAP is one of our most effective tools for fighting hunger. Our goal should be to reach eligible families, not create an obstacle course that prevents them from receiving assistance.

Would you advocate for SNAP eligibility or benefits amounts to be expanded?

Candidate Answer: Yes. I would support expanding SNAP eligibility and ensuring benefit levels reflect the real cost of purchasing healthy food. I would also work to reduce benefit cliffs that can cause working families to lose critical food assistance after even a modest increase in income, and ensure benefits keep pace with rising food costs.

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 not accidental. They reflect longstanding inequities in wages, wealth, housing, healthcare, and access to opportunity, compounded by discrimination and barriers that can make it harder for people to access the assistance they are eligible for. When families are already more likely to face high housing costs, lower wages, language or accessibility barriers, or gaps in healthcare and employment, rising food prices hit even harder.

At the same time, the Trump Administration has sought to divide Americans along racial, gender, and other lines rather than confront the challenges families share. When the federal government targets vulnerable communities, weakens civil rights protections, or makes people afraid to access public programs, it deepens the very disparities we should be working to eliminate. Hunger should never be used as a political weapon, and access to food should never depend on who you are or where you come from.

Government has a responsibility to address both the immediate need and the underlying inequities that drive it. That means protecting and strengthening SNAP and other federal nutrition programs, removing unnecessary administrative barriers, ensuring programs are accessible regardless of language or disability, and protecting eligible immigrant families from being deterred from seeking assistance. It also means tackling the economic pressures that drive hunger in the first place by lowering the costs of housing, childcare, healthcare, and energy and expanding economic opportunity.

In Congress, I will fight against efforts to divide us and for a government that protects the dignity of every person, ensures every eligible family can access the support they need, and gives everyone a fair opportunity to thrive.

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

Candidate Answer:

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Name:	Tram Nguyen
Party:	Democratic
District:	Sixth
Website:	tramforcongress.com

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

Candidate Answer: I grew up food insecure. My family fled an authoritarian regime and arrived here in Massachusetts with only \$100 and a few suitcases. My parents worked multiple jobs, but they still struggled to make rent and put food on the table. I remember standing in line at a food pantry when we simply did not have enough to make ends meet. That experience has stayed with me throughout my life.

I am deeply grateful for the food assistance and community programs that helped my family gain our footing and build a better life. Those programs were not a handout. They were a bridge to stability and an investment in my family and in my future. That belief has shaped my professional and public service. As a legal aid attorney, I represented vulnerable clients, including low wage workers, survivors of domestic violence, immigrants, and veterans. I helped people navigate red tape and access benefits and resources, including SNAP, so they could afford food and other basic necessities. I saw firsthand how difficult it can be for families to access programs that are supposed to be there to help them, and how transformative that assistance can be when people are able to get it. As a state representative, I have continued this work through the Food System Caucus and by advocating for policies that help families across Massachusetts access nutritious food. Massachusetts has made important investments, including

universal free school meals for K through 12 students, the Healthy Incentives Program, which helps SNAP households purchase locally grown produce, and funding that allows food banks to purchase food. These investments matter, but the need remains enormous. There are more than 1,000 community food assistance organizations across Massachusetts, including food pantries served by our four regional food banks. These organizations are doing everything they can to meet rising demand, but food banks and pantries are not a long term solution to hunger. In 2025, according to the Greater Boston Food Bank, 40 percent of Massachusetts households experienced food insecurity.

If elected to Congress, I will bring both my lived experience and my years of advocacy to the fight against hunger. I will work to protect and strengthen SNAP and other federal nutrition programs, expand access to healthy and nutritious food, and ensure that children do not have to learn or grow while hungry. I will also fight to protect the funding that supports food banks and community organizations while recognizing that emergency food assistance must complement, not replace, strong federal programs that prevent hunger in the first place. I want to build a food system that supports families, farmers, workers, and local communities, while making sure that no one has to choose between paying the rent and putting food on the table.

My family was able to build a better life because people and programs were there for us when we needed them. I carry that gratitude with me, and it is a major reason I believe so strongly that government should be there for every family who needs a helping hand. No child should have to stand in a food pantry line because their parents cannot afford dinner. No family should have to navigate a maze of red tape to access food assistance. And no one should have to wonder whether they will have enough to eat. In Congress, I will fight to make sure that the same opportunity my family received is available to every family in Massachusetts and across the country.

What do you believe is the role of the federal government in ensuring everyone in our state has enough to eat and reducing the demand for emergency food resources?

Candidate Answer: *Having visited community pillars like The Open Door in Gloucester, The Salem Pantry, and Neighbors in Need in Andover, I've seen the incredible work local pantries do every single day. But emergency food organizations were built to fill temporary gaps, not to replace a functioning social safety net. The federal government must step up and treat hunger as the preventable public health and economic crisis it is.*

First, Washington must protect and modernize core nutrition safety nets. That means raising baseline SNAP benefits to reflect the true cost of living in high-cost regions like the North Shore and Merrimack Valley, streamlining enrollment for low-income and immigrant working families, and expanding WIC. Next, the federal government should follow Massachusetts' lead by nationalizing Universal School Meals, ensuring every public school student receives two nutritious meals a day so no child goes hungry in the classroom.

Finally, we must attack hunger at its root by treating food as healthcare and building working-class economic stability. I believe the federal government should expand "Food is Medicine" programs through Medicare and Medicaid, funding produce prescriptions to improve health outcomes and reduce diet-related illness. Above all, we must relieve the financial squeeze on families by restoring the expanded Child Tax Credit, raising the federal minimum wage, and lowering everyday costs for housing and healthcare so working parents can afford to keep nutritious food on the table without relying on emergency pantries.

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

Candidate Answer: *Congress has a clear responsibility to modernize, fund, and protect SNAP so that state agencies can function efficiently rather than serving as a bottleneck for hungry families. First, Congress must eliminate administrative red tape and modernize eligibility interview rules. Under current federal guidelines, rigid recertification and interview requirements trap families and overwhelm state call centers, leading to overwhelming backlogs and burdensome bureaucratic barriers to accessing basic necessities. Congress should pass federal legislation, such as the SNAP Recertification Reform Act, to allow state agencies greater*

flexibility to streamline or waive redundant phone interviews for low-risk renewals. We must also permanently allow continuous multi-year coverage for stable-income households, like seniors and people with disabilities, so caseworkers can focus their time on urgent initial applications and complex cases rather than processing repetitive annual paperwork.

Second, Washington must invest directly in state administrative infrastructure and technology. When federal mandates push states to process endless reporting requirements without supplying matching funds for caseworker staffing and modern call center technology, service collapses. Congress needs to expand federal administrative funding grants specifically targeted at upgrading state IT systems, deploying modern call-backs, and hiring and retaining front-line caseworkers to bring hold times down, and ensure everyone who calls in, gets a call back.

Finally, Congress must defend SNAP from harmful benefit cuts and harsh reporting requirements. Congress must protect baseline benefits, raise income limits to match the high cost of living in places like Massachusetts, and ensure that applying for food assistance is straightforward, accessible, and dignified.

As a member of Congress, would you advocate to ensure every eligible household is able to receive SNAP with minimal bureaucratic hurdles?

Candidate Answer: Absolutely. SNAP is one of the purest examples of what good government can do for people. It is nothing short of life-saving. Every eligible person and home should receive this public assistance if they need it, for as long as they need it, with minimal wait times and streamlined processing. I understand the interest in vetting folks signing up for these programs, but we are limiting the amount of good we can do when we create overly complex processes for entry.

Would you advocate for SNAP eligibility or benefits amounts to be expanded?

Candidate Answer: Yes, I support both expanding SNAP eligibility and increasing benefit amounts. Growing up in a working-class immigrant family where every dollar mattered, I know SNAP is a vital, dignified lifeline. But the current program

relies on outdated formulas that fail to reflect the high cost of living families face today in Massachusetts.

In Congress, I will fight to increase base benefit amounts and recalculate allotment models so that benefits reflect the actual cost of nutritious food in high-cost regions like the North Shore and Merrimack Valley, rather than relying on outdated national averages. I will also push to raise income eligibility limits to eliminate situations where a modest raise strips away essential support, and remove harsh administrative barriers that unfairly bar college students, low-wage workers, and immigrant families from accessing food assistance. SNAP should be a safety net, but also a bridge toward economic stability. Just because someone is not starving does not mean they are having their food and nutrition needs met, and we need to do better as a society to ensure that we set folks up for success and stability long-term.

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: *Like so many injustices, food insecurity is rooted in systemic economic inequities, generational wealth gaps, and persistent discrimination in housing, healthcare, and employment. Growing up in a working-class immigrant family where we depended on subsidized housing and stood in line at food pantries, I know firsthand how language barriers, fear and mistrust of government, confusing red tape, discrimination in access to benefits, a lack of generational wealth or access to high-paying jobs compound to keep food out of reach.*

Government must take direct, targeted action to dismantle these structural barriers. We must work to remove administrative red tape by simplifying SNAP and WIC enrollment, permanently expand multi-language support, and eliminate

punitive work reporting rules that disproportionately harm workers with disabilities and immigrants. We also need to invest in economic support that can help folks build a life beyond government assistance. We can do this by restoring the expanded Child Tax Credit, raising the federal minimum wage, and federalizing programs like Massachusetts' Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) so families can buy fresh, culturally preferred produce directly from local farmers. Beyond this changes, it is also our duty to attack the root causes of poverty by investing in deeply affordable housing, expanding rental assistance, and protecting and subsidizing health coverage as we work towards Medicare for All, so families have their other baseline physical needs met, in addition to access to food.

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

Candidate Answer: I believe we cannot fully address hunger without addressing the economic conditions that cause families to go hungry in the first place. My own family's experience taught me that lesson. My parents worked multiple jobs after we arrived in Massachusetts, but there were still times when their wages were not enough to cover rent and put food on the table. I know firsthand that working hard is not always enough when wages are too low and the cost of basic necessities keeps rising.

In Congress, I will fight to raise wages and strengthen worker protections so that people who work hard can afford to support themselves and their families. My experience as a legal aid attorney representing low wage workers also showed me how wage theft, unstable employment, and other workplace abuses can push families into crisis. Workers should not have to choose between speaking up about workplace violations and being able to afford their next meal.

Housing costs are another major driver of food insecurity. When too much of a family's income goes toward rent or a mortgage, food is often one of the first things that gets sacrificed. I will work to expand affordable housing, protect tenants, and address the rising cost of housing so that families are not forced to choose between keeping a roof over their heads and putting food on the table.

I also believe we cannot have true food security if immigrant families are afraid to seek help. As someone who came to this country as a child after my family fled an authoritarian regime, I know how much courage it takes to build a new life in a new country. No family should be afraid to access food assistance or other basic services because of their immigration status or fear of government enforcement. I will fight to protect immigrant families from policies that create fear and prevent eligible people from accessing the resources they need.

For me, addressing hunger means building an economy where people can earn enough to live, afford a safe and stable home, and access support without fear. My family was able to build a better life because people and institutions were there for us when we needed them. I want to make sure that same opportunity exists for every family.