

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:	James O'Day
Party:	Democratic
District:	14th Worcester
Position Sought:	State Representative
Website:	https://www.repjimoday.com/

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

Candidate Answer: During my time as a social worker, I met with many people and families that needed assistance with access to nutritional programs. Today as a state representative, I assist constituents navigating their food system benefits. I continue to support DTA caseworkers, ensuring their funding and securing additional funds, particularly through Fair Share monies. Also, I team with the ESWA to volunteer on their Meals on Wheels routes.

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 has a vital role to play in ensuring everyone in Massachusetts has access to food; no one in our state should face food insecurity. Our state government continues to support key programs by ensuring state dollars to bolster their efforts while also responding to the unique needs that arise, such as working to fill the gaps in federal funding.

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

Candidate Answer: *The legislature has continued to increase funding for anti-hunger programs such as SNAP while also supporting DTA caseworkers who are experiencing exponential increases in their caseloads. This year alone the House secured over \$40M of Fair Share Amendment revenue to fund DTA offices in order to alleviate the strain on caseworkers and amplifying support for constituents.*

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: *Absolutely. I have consistently advocated for state funds to be allocated to DTA offices to see additional caseworkers hired so that every person in our state can access the nutritional benefits they need.*

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: *We know that caseloads for DTA offices continue to rise dramatically and that staffing and funding to support staffing is a major barrier for access to program benefits. Further, we have seen prices rise across the board, especially at grocery stores and gas pumps. We know these cost increases affect certain demographics at disproportionately higher rates. It's essential that the government continues to meet with community members and place funding supports where they can be most beneficial.*

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

Candidate Answer: *I look forward to continuing to use my role as state representative to advocate for funding and program supports that every constituent needs in Massachusetts, and volunteering to support those programs however they'll have me.*