



Senate President Karen Spilka
Senator Michael Rodrigues
Senator Cindy Friedman
Senator Patrick O'Connor

Speaker of the House Ron Mariano
Representative Aaron Michlewitz
Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante
Representative Todd Smola

June 7, 2023

Dear Madam President, Speaker Mariano, and Conference Committee Members:

Last week, The Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB) released a [third annual statewide report](#) on food insecurity, finding **1 in 3 households in MA are food insecure** – and signaling a [persisting hunger crisis](#). Based on the data, validating the heightened demand in our charitable food system, GBFB respectfully requests your support to fund the **Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP) at \$41 million in the FY24 State Budget**.

Not only is MEFAP a critical lifeline for more than 850 pantries feeding people in every city and town in Massachusetts by ensuring a consistent local supply of quality, nutrient-dense foods and fresh produce at no cost, but it benefits local farms, fisheries, and food manufacturing companies – with 42% of funding reinvested into our statewide economy just last year.

GBFB's third annual statewide study on food insecurity, ["Opportunities to Improve Food Equity & Access in Massachusetts: Ending Hunger – Together,"](#) paints a stark picture of the current hunger crisis. As pandemic aid is pulled back and the cost of living is at an all-time high, [food insecurity is on the rise again](#). The number one reason survey respondents reported going to a pantry was due to the high cost of food in the grocery stores, highlighting the affordability issues people in our state are facing and the tradeoffs households make to keep food on the table. As a result, our partner community food providers are ordering food from us faster than we can replenish our warehouse. Our recent [MEFAP Roadshow in Chicopee, Chatham and Everett](#) demonstrated this need as well as the benefits of this hunger-relief program.

Additionally, we ask that you consider two other critical hunger-relief budget priorities:

- **End Hunger for State and Public College Students** – \$1 million in the FY24 budget will allow the MA Department of Higher Education to support sustainable hunger free campus initiatives and promote student success. We are deeply appreciative that the Senate adopted Senator Lovely's amendment, following a unanimous roll call requested by Minority Leader Senator Tarr

- **Make School Meals for All Permanent** – Research shows that hungry students can't learn. We have the opportunity to impact families and children for generations to come by making this successful program permanent.

With proposed cuts to SNAP and federal cash assistance programs on the table, further threatening the state of hunger across the country, we seek your support of these budget requests in our pursuit of ending hunger in Massachusetts.

With deep gratitude for your consideration,

Catherine D'Amato

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