

MEFAP

MEFAP FY25 Budget Request: Fund Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP, DAR 2511-0105) at \$47,000,000.

MEFAP enables the four Massachusetts food banks —also known as the Food Bank Coalition of Massachusetts – The Greater Boston Food Bank, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, The Merrimack Valley Food Bank, and The Worcester County Food Bank - to purchase a consistent supply of the basics of a healthy diet, such as milk, eggs, peanut butter, fresh fruits, and vegetables, to be distributed at no cost to families in need through its statewide network of community food program partners.

1. **Hunger in Massachusetts is at historic levels.** One in three of our neighbors across the state face food insecurity, and these rates are even higher among people of color, seniors, and LGBTQ+ people. In 2023, pandemic SNAP benefits expired, leading more people to turn to the charitable food system to fill the gaps.
2. **The cost of living in Massachusetts continues to rise.** Rising costs of transportation, housing, childcare, utilities, and other basic needs make it harder for each dollar to go as far as it has in the past—supermarket prices are now 25% higher than in January 2020—challenging shoppers and food banks alike. For food banks, labor shortages, supply chain issues, and unpredictable weather patterns have made food purchasing more costly.
3. **MEFAP food reaches people in every city and town across the Commonwealth.** Over 850 food pantries, soup kitchens, senior meal sites, and shelters that make up the charitable food system depend on MEFAP funding to ensure neighbors can access healthy food. These organizations receive most of their food from food banks, and the four MA food banks collectively receive over a quarter of their food from MEFAP.
4. **MEFAP is an economic stimulus to the Commonwealth.** In FY23, 51% MEFAP funds supported local food producers including farmers, food manufacturers, and fishermen.