



Talking points for MEFAP FY26 Budget Request: Fund Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (DAR 2511–0105) at \$55,500,000.

MEFAP enables the four Massachusetts food banks —the Food Bank Coalition of Massachusetts (FBCMA: 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. Household pantry use in Massachusetts grew by nearly 80% from 2020 to 2023.
2. **Federal cuts threaten current state of food insecurity:** Proposed and ongoing federal cuts to programs like SNAP, TEFAP, school meals, and Medicaid/Medicare pose serious risks to food security in Massachusetts. As of April 2024, over \$3.5 million in federal USDA food has been cut in Massachusetts. MEFAP is a vital state-level response to support the emergency food system and protect our most vulnerable residents. In January 2025, more than 1.1 million people were enrolled in SNAP —over 8,000 more than in January 2024. Proposals to cut SNAP benefits will lead more people to the charitable food system to fill the gaps.
3. **The cost of living and cost of food in Massachusetts remains high.** 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. According to Feeding America, the average cost of a meal in the Commonwealth is \$4.41—the third highest of any state behind only Hawaii and Alaska. For FBCMA, labor shortages, supply chain issues, and unpredictable weather patterns have made food purchasing more costly.
4. **MEFAP food reaches people in every city and town across the Commonwealth.** Over 882,000 people are served by over 900 food pantries, soup kitchens, meal sites, shelters, senior programs, and college and healthcare mobile markets that make up the charitable food system. These partners rely on MEFAP for access to healthy food, with nearly a third of the food they receive coming from MEFAP.
5. **MEFAP is an economic stimulus to the Commonwealth.** In FY24, over 50% MEFAP funds —a total of \$17.03M —was spent with Massachusetts-based suppliers to support

local industry and local food producers including farmers, food manufacturers, and fishermen.