



April 28, 2021

Chairman Jim McGovern  
House Committee on Rules  
H-312 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McGovern,

We, the Food Bank Coalition of Massachusetts (FBCMA), are writing in support of today's hearing and your overall effort to convene a White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Hunger and end hunger in the United States by 2030. Over the past year, the food banks have responded to a historic level of need, which has both shined a spotlight on food insecurity and created a renewed urgency for action.

According to Feeding America, Massachusetts had the highest increase in food insecurity in the country in 2020, with 1 in 8 people and 1 in 6 children affected. FBCMA's network, which includes 1,000 food pantries, meal programs, shelters, and mobile markets, served an average of 64% more individuals last year compared to 2019.

The pandemic has taken a devastating toll on our families, but it has also produced temporary policy solutions that offer a permanent path forward. We support the significant strides that the Biden administration and USDA have made to date, including the American Rescue Plan, boosts to SNAP and P-EBT, and the rescinding of the previous administration's public charge rule.

FBCMA recommends the following actions for reducing food insecurity in Massachusetts and across the country. We also recommend that throughout the policymaking process, BIPOC individuals and those with lived experience are part of both the planning and decision-making.

- USDA adoption of the Low-Cost Food Plan in determining SNAP benefits, or better yet, a food cost plan that reflects the real cost of healthy food that nourishes families.
- Minimize the "cliff effect" by extending the time frame households can continue to receive benefits and/or reduce benefits gradually over time.
- Allow senior citizens, people with disabilities, and unhoused people to use their SNAP benefits to purchase hot foods.
- Invest more funds to support local farmers.
- Continued funding for BIPOC farmers.
- Connect local farmers with people experiencing food insecurity through school meals and USDA distribution programs.
- Create a national communications strategy to end the stigma around food insecurity and accessing federal nutrition programs.
- Subsidize childcare and pre-kindergarten so that all women and single parents have more flexibility and support to enter the workforce.

Returning to pre-pandemic levels of food insecurity is unacceptable – we need to solve this problem once and for all. The pandemic has showed us that food banks cannot solve hunger alone through more donated and purchased food. Only federal programs such as SNAP and unemployment assistance can scale up to address a crisis like we saw over the past year. We need federal policy solutions to truly address the root causes of hunger.

Thank you for being a long-time champion and leader on the issue of ending hunger. We look forward to being continued partners in this effort.

Sincerely,

Amy Pessia  
Executive Director  
Merrimack Valley Food Bank

Andrew Morehouse  
Executive Director  
The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts

Catherine D'Amato  
President and CEO  
The Greater Boston Food Bank

Jean McMurray  
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#### MERRIMACK VALLEY FOOD BANK

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#### THE FOOD BANK OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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#### THE GREATER BOSTON FOOD BANK

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#### WORCESTER COUNTY FOOD BANK, INC.

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