



THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, November 3, 2025

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Mayor Sarno, Sheriff Cocchi, HHS Commissioner Caulton-Harris and NAACP President Bishop Swan announce partnership to support Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and Local Food Pantries

Springfield, MA – Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, Health and Human Services (HHS) Commissioner Helen Caulton-Harris and Hampden County Sheriff Nicholas Cocchi joined at City Hall on Monday morning with Leslie Smith on behalf of Spring of Hope Church / National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Springfield branch President Bishop Talbert Swan, and Andrew Morehouse, Executive Director of the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, in announcing a collaborative partnership for a food drive initiative during these challenging times. State Representative Bud L. Williams and City Councilor Lavar Click-Bruce also joined and gave remarks.

The City of Springfield Departments and local partners will be collecting donations of non-perishable food items for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, which will serve as the distribution center for all of our local food pantries. All our Springfield Library locations will serve as collection points for non-perishable food donations. The Hampden County Sheriff's Office will provide logistical support to get donations delivered to the Food Bank. In addition, Mayor Sarno and HHS Commissioner Caulton-Harris announced the City of Springfield will also support our local food pantries in the community with a \$40,000 grant.

Mayor Sarno states, "Following up on my remarks at the recent NAACP Banquet event last week, my administration has been working behind the scenes to put together a collaborative plan for our residents during these challenging times with the federal government shutdown and the financial uncertainty with the federally funded SNAP program. As my administration has done before

during our natural and man-made disasters, together we will again step up for our working families in need. I want to thank and acknowledge Sheriff Nick Cocchi, NAACP President Bishop Talbert Swan and Andrew Morehouse from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, and Commissioner Helen Caulton-Harris for coming together and working with my administration on this much-needed and life-saving food drive initiative. I would also like to thank Governor Maura Healey, who I had spoken to directly, for her efforts in freeing up much-needed state funding to help and provide relief. Also, a big thank you to our city employees, who have always been so generous with their donations.”

“The City of Springfield, including our local neighborhood libraries, will be collecting non-perishable food donations through Thanksgiving! Sheriff crews will be collecting and transporting this much-needed food to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts where Andrew Morehouse and team will help to deliver these items to our local food pantries. I would encourage any community agency or organization, such as our neighborhood councils, churches and places of worship to also participate too,” **Mayor Sarno** added.

“Delays and uncertainty in federal support for important programs like SNAP mean too many of our neighbors are teetering on the edge,” explained **Sheriff Nick Cocchi**. “That’s why, here in Hampden County, we must step up. This food drive isn’t just a charitable event — it’s our community saying no one will go hungry on our watch. When national safety nets falter, we must weave a local one together. I’m proud we’re doing exactly that.”

“Today we are taking a stand for our neighbors in Springfield and Western Massachusetts,” stated **NAACP President Bishop Swan**. “With the federal decision to halt Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits beginning November 1, we know too many families will face hunger and uncertainty.”

Bishop Swan continued, “That’s why the Spring of Hope Church of God in Christ is committed to be in partnership with the city of Springfield and other community stakeholders. This partnership is about faith in action and our shared responsibility to protect the dignity of every person. Families in our city shouldn’t face the fear of an empty kitchen because of a political stalemate. We will ensure that when Washington turns its back, our community turns toward each other.”

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts’ food warehouse, resource, education, and advocacy center in Chicopee serves the four counties of Western Massachusetts. It provides local food pantries and meal sites the equivalent of two meals for every dollar donated. Cash donation can be made online at: www.foodbankwma.org

“In partnership with 53 community and faith-based centers in Springfield alone, the Food Bank is committed to providing nutritious food to people when and where they need it. This is urgent now more than ever given the federal government decision not to issue November SNAP benefits to almost 108,000 Springfield residents and more than 1 million citizens across the Commonwealth,” said **Andrew Morehouse, Food Bank Executive Director**.

Mayor Sarno also explained, “There is huge misnomer that those who get these benefits do not work, simply not true. Working families, children, elderly, veterans, so many rely on this program. I echo Sheriff Cocchi and my colleagues: this inaction is unacceptable; the federal level must get their act together. People could get sick, even die if this continues. We cannot wait any longer as some continue to put politics before people. We must work together and act, and if the program gets funded, we will still continue this drive through Thanksgiving. No donation is too small or too large. Once again, we will rally, and we will come together.”

As mentioned, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts distributes nutritious food safely to local pantries and assistance programs throughout the region. The fastest and easiest way to support the Food Bank is by making an online donation. Every dollar provides the equivalent of two meals to the community.

Make a donation online: <https://www.foodbankwma.org/donate/home/> ; or mail your check to:

Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
25 Carew Street
Chicopee, MA 01020

The Springfield City Libraries have also stepped up to serve as community collection points for non-perishable food items to be donated to the Food Bank of Western MA. Check your library’s regular hours of operation <https://www.springfieldlibrary.org/library/locations-and-hours/>



Additionally, Mayor Sarno and HHS Commissioner Helen Caulton-Harris are pleased to announce that the City of Springfield will also support our local food pantries in the community with a \$40,000 grant. Nine (9) local food pantries will be awarded \$5,000 each in support of their local food pantries in our community.

HHS Commissioner Caulton-Harris states, “First, I want to thank Mayor Sarno for his continued support in the Department of Health and Human Services. As the uncertainty with our federally funded programs continues, it is important that here in the City of Springfield that we are able to offer and provide what assistance we can. This funding will help support nine of our local food pantries and the families in need that they serve.”

Local food pantries being awarded are:

- Loaves and Fishes
- Springfield Rescue Mission
- Mt. Zion Baptist Church Soup Kitchen
- St. John’s Congregational Church
- Mobile Food Bank – Third Baptist Church
- The Market at Gray House
- MLK Jr. Family Services – Emergency Food Distribution Program
- Spring of Hope

- Community Survival Center, Indian Orchard Food Pantry Center

“This is a life or death or situation”, stated **State Representative Bud Williams**. “Some folks in our community, hard working people who have contributed for their whole lives, will be faced with a choice between food or medicine, nutrition or electricity. This is supposed to be the greatest country on Earth. While the federal government plays around with people’s lives, we will step up, take action, lead by example, and work together.”

Ward 5 City Councilor Lavar Click-Bruce stated, “I’m proud to be from a Springfield where we always step up as a community. What is happening on the federal level is sickening. But we will not be divided here in Springfield where we know we have dedicated people who will always step up to help. Every family deserves support and I am so proud to see everyone coming together to roll up their sleeves and truly help.”

Leslie Smith, on behalf of Spring of Hope Church and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Springfield branch President Bishop Talbert Swan joined. She stated, “We are proud to come together and I am inspired by each person I see reaching out to lend a helping hand. I am rolling my sleeves; Bishop Swan is rolling up his sleeves – we would never ask the community to do something we are not willing to do ourselves. From volunteering your time, making whatever donation you can, or helping to spread the word, we need you in this fight, we all have to do this together.”

Find your **neighborhood Library branch** location and hours:
<https://www.springfieldlibrary.org/library/locations-and-hours/>

Visit the **Food Bank** website to **make a donation**: <https://www.foodbankwma.org/donate/home/>

Find Food Pantries near you: <https://www.foodbankwma.org/get-help/food-finder/>

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