

MEDIA ADVISORY



For Immediate Release

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Date: December 5, 2022

The Food Bank, Springfield WORKS, and the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council Celebrate a Successful Advocacy Push for Important Legislation in the State House

HATFIELD, MA- On Wednesday, December 7th from 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Springfield WORKS, and the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council (EDC) will host the **Cliff Effect Pilot Celebration and Press Event**. The event will be held in the TD Bank Room at 1441 Main Street in Downtown Springfield to present the legislation and important next steps. (It will include light refreshments.) The schedule is as follows:

11:00 a.m.: Event Start

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.: Speakers

- Xiomara Albán DeLobato, Chief of Staff, Western Mass EDC
- Rick Sullivan, President & CEO, Western Mass EDC
- Andrew Morehouse, Executive Director, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
- Anne Kandilis, Director, Springfield WORKS
- Laura Sylvester, Public Policy Manager, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
- Senator Eric Lesser
- State Representative Carlos González
- State Representative Patricia Duffy
- Tracye Whitfield, Springfield City Councilor, and Executive Director for the Coalition for an Equitable Economy

12:15 p.m.: Network and Media Interviews

12:30 p.m.: Event Close

During the event, speakers will discuss the importance of this legislation and the intended impact of the pilot program to mitigate the unintended consequence and failure of public policy known as the “cliff

effect.” It occurs when household earned income increases just enough such that families precipitously lose eligibility for public assistance supports like food, childcare, and housing services, resulting in lower income overall to achieve economic stability. The cliff effect discourages individuals from advancing in their careers for a higher wage due to the sudden loss of critical services that ultimately leads to a decline in the standard of living, keeping individuals and families stuck in a cycle of poverty.

The three-year pilot program will utilize a monetary support to provide 100 households throughout the Commonwealth with benefits tailored to fill the gap created by the cliff effect as they work towards economic independence from public benefits programs.

“This pilot is a tremendous victory for workers and families throughout the Commonwealth,” stated **Anne Kandilis, Director of Springfield WORKS/Western Mass Economic Development Council**. “To create economic opportunity, we must remove obstacles for people as they work to earn a livable wage by making sure that we do not strip away public benefits too rapidly.”

Laura Sylvester, Public Policy Manager at The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts explains “Many of the households who receive emergency food at any of our 164 independent, local member food pantries and meal sites are directly impacted by the cliff effect. Fear of losing benefits prevents people from advancing in their careers, keeping them trapped in a cycle of poverty. It is a major cause of food insecurity and economic instability.”

The passage and implementation of this Pilot is a major step to helping solve the cliff effect in Massachusetts. The bill sponsors, the western MA delegation, and the Economic Pathways Coalition, all collaborated for several years to advocate for this important pilot program to demonstrate how public policy can support working families better to become food secure and economically stable.

For media inquiries, please contact Deb Ondo, Communications and Engagement Manager at The Food Bank at debo@foodbankwma.org or 413-419-0170.

Event partners:



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The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts believes that everyone has a right to healthy food regardless of their circumstances. Serving Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties, The Food Bank leads the region’s emergency food network of 160+ independent, local food pantries and meal sites, distributing nutritious food to households with lower incomes. Since 1982, The Food Bank has been providing individuals facing hunger with the food they need to survive and leading communities towards lasting solutions to food insecurity by addressing its underlying causes. The Food Bank is committed to creating a western Massachusetts where no one goes hungry, and everyone has access to nutritious food. For more information, visit foodbankwma.org.



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