

FOOD BANK

OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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FY24 State Budget Passes Measures to Address Hunger and its Underlying Causes

Hunger advocates are celebrating wins for Universal School Meals, The Hunger Free Campus Initiative, and more.

On August 9, 2023, Governor Maura Healey signed the Massachusetts FY24 budget agreed upon by the House and Senate Conference Committee into law. The reconciled budget includes many of the food insecurity related benefits and provisions the Food Bank and its partners have been advocating for, such as:

- Funding to make Universal School Meals permanent in MA for all K-12 students.
- \$35.5 million for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP).
- \$1 million for the Hunger-Free Campus Initiative addressing food insecurity on state funded college campuses.
- \$150 million for Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) to improve bus route coverage, frequency, and the hiring of additional drivers. There is an additional \$15M earmarked for fare-free bus pilots.
- A 10% increase in cash assistance benefits helping the poorest families in Massachusetts meet their basic needs.

“With this budget, Governor Healey and the Massachusetts legislature once again affirm their commitment to reducing food insecurity and providing basic rights for all residents,” said Food Bank Public Policy Manager Laura Sylvester, who has been hard at work advocating for the passage of these bills. “We are now the eighth state in the nation to provide free school meals to all K-12 students! We’re also pleased the budget contains funding for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP), the Hunger-Free Campus Initiative, and a huge increase in funding for the Regional Transit Authorities. The Food Bank will continue to advocate for these and other policies that support our mission to end hunger in Massachusetts and beyond.”

The Food Bank extends its thanks to Governor Healey and all our representatives in the House and Senate for your commitment to our communities, as well as to all those who worked with the Food Bank to advocate for these measures. Thank you especially to those with lived

experience of food insecurity, poverty, and hunger whose personal testimonies are critical to bringing awareness to these issues and creating effective solutions.

About the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts: Since 1982, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts has been a community partner to end hunger. We provide healthy and culturally responsive food directly through our own programs (Mobile Food Banks and Brown Bag: Food for Elders), and through the food assistance network in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties. These independent pantries, meal sites and shelters are on the front lines providing food and resources to individuals, families, seniors, children, and people with disabilities, including veterans, so they may lead healthy and meaningful lives. The Food Bank partners on public education and advocacy to address systemic issues that lead to hunger, operating with the belief that everyone has a right to healthy food.



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