

Feeding Our Neighbors Coalition

Support An Act Establishing Basic Needs Assistance for Massachusetts Immigrant Residents (H135 / S76)



BACKGROUND:

Many **legally present immigrants don't qualify** for safety-net benefits, including:
Pending Asylum applicants,
DACA/Dreamers,
Humanitarian Parole,
Victims of violence
Temporary Protected Status

In the 1996 "Welfare Reform Law," the **U.S. Congress cut core food and cash assistance benefits** to millions of legally present immigrants in Massachusetts and across the nation.

1 in 6 Massachusetts residents, roughly 17%, are foreign born. MA has the 7th largest foreign-born population in the U.S. Recently, MA has received many new arrivals **fleeing violence and persecution** in their homelands.

From 1997 to 2002, the MA Legislature provided state-funded food benefits (SNAP) and cash assistance (TAFDC and EAEDC) to immigrants cut off from federal benefits.

Most of those state-funded benefits ended in 2002. Yet **families with minor children** need temporary cash and food benefits and our most vulnerable **elderly and disabled immigrants** need access to food benefits.

Five states currently provide state funded benefits including CA, IL, ME, MN & WA. It's time to restore benefits to MA immigrants in need!

ANNUAL COST:

Restoring basic nutrition and cash benefits for low-income, legally present individuals and families in **Massachusetts would cost approximately \$18M in the first fiscal year**. This funding could provide:

- An average of \$180/month in state-funded SNAP benefits to approximately 8,000 to 12,000 immigrants.
- An average of \$300/month TAFDC cash benefits to approximately 1,000 to 1,500 immigrant children and parents.

MORE INFORMATION: FeedingOurNeighborsMA.org

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Supporting Member Organizations

Ascentria Care Alliance
Boston Children's Hospital
Boston Missionary Baptist Community Center
Bunker Hill Community College
Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC)
Cambridge Health Alliance
Catholic Charities Boston
Central West Justice Center
Child Health Equity Center, UMass Chan / UMass Memorial Health
Children's HealthWatch
Citizens Inn
City of Chelsea Dept of Housing + Community Development
Clarendon Early Education Services, Inc.
Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester
Community Teamwork
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath)
El Buen Samaritano Food Program Inc
Fall River WIC - HealthFirst Family Care Center
The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
The Greater Boston Food Bank
Greater Boston Legal Services
Health Leads
International Institute of New England
Jane Doe Inc.
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Justice Center of Southeast MA
Justice Resource Institute (JRI)
La Colaborativa
Latinos Unidos en Massachusetts (LUMA)
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
Lynn Rapid Response Network
The Marion Institute and the Southcoast Food Policy Council
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA)
Massachusetts Food Systems Collaborative
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Mass General Brigham
Merrimack Valley Food Bank
MetroWest Food Collaborative
Metrowest Legal Services
MLPB
National Association of Social Workers, MA Chapter
The Neighborhood Developers
Nourishing the North Shore
Office Of Food Access and Healthy Communities, City of Somerville
Our Neighbors' Table
Project Bread
REACH Beyond Domestic Violence
Regional Environmental Council Inc
Rescuing Leftover Cuisine
Rian Immigrant Center
Rosie's Place
Roxbury Community College
SEIU Local 509
Somerville Food Security Coalition
Source Hub
Springfield Food Policy Council
Three Sisters
UMass Chan Medical
United South End Settlements
Worcester County Food Bank, Inc.
Worcester Food Policy Council
YMCA of Greater Boston
YMCA Southcoast

Examples of Immigrant Households

A mother and two children from Turkey fled an extremely abusive relationship with her former partner. Now living in Greater Boston, she'd had her application for Political Asylum pending since 2018. The mother has work authorization and has been working two jobs to support her young children, but is making minimal pay. Due to her immigration status, she cannot qualify for SNAP, nor SNAP related benefits like HIP.

A family of three from Africa entered the U.S. seeking medical care for their severely disabled young child. The parents planned to stay here only a few months for critical medical care and return home to their other child. The child's medical needs are so extensive, the family has had to stay much longer and have depleted all their savings. The family was granted Deferred Action for purposes of the medical care, but due to their immigration status, they are not eligible for SNAP or TANF yet do not know when they can return home.

A homeless Colombian mother and children stayed at a Kingston MA shelter until very recently. They entered the U.S. with Humanitarian Parole, but were denied DTA benefits because of their status. She reached out to La Colaborativa, which provided her emergency food cards, but that was not sustainable. Some of the shelter families tried to share their food. Having few resources and being far from any work opportunities, she left the shelter to stay with a stranger she met.

An MGH patient from Eswatini arrived in the US one year ago. She struggles daily with the memories of the torture and instability she has suffered, making it difficult to find work. She has pending claim for Political Asylum. Her social worker has faced significant challenges trying to locate food and housing support as this patient does not qualify for SNAP or TANF assistance.

