



FALL 2024

# METROWEST FOOD COLLABORATIVE NEWSLETTER

**Dear MetroWest Community,**

*We are reaching the time of year when we collectively slow down, pause to be with loved ones, reflect, and prepare our energy for what's next. Whatever your traditions, we wish you warmth and joy this season.*

*Unfortunately, the holidays are also a time of struggle for too many, and area food access programs will be working hard to meet demand. We thank the staff and volunteers of these programs for all that they do, and we recommit ourselves to advancing the vision of an equitable, sustainable, and abundant food future for all MetroWest residents in the year ahead. Read on for more on what we've been up to, how that work will take shape in 2025, and what you can do right now to support one critical component: the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP).*

*With appreciation,*

**Kali Coughlan**  
MetroWest Food Collaborative Manager



## In the News

- Unfortunately, **cuts to Healthy Incentive Program (HIP) benefits went into effect on December 1st** due to insufficient funding. Families are now receiving just \$20/month in HIP regardless of household size. It's important to make sure SNAP recipients are aware of this change this holiday season *and* to keep advocating for more funding. *See more in our Advocacy section to take action!*
- **Keep an eye out for details on our annual Food Access Summit!** This year's focus will be on the new federal landscape and how it may impact food access and our advocacy at the state and local level. We currently plan to hold the Summit in March - more details are coming soon!

# MWFC UPDATES



## SNAP & WIC OUTREACH EFFORTS

**Our new SNAP & WIC Outreach Coordinator Giuliana Bacoccini has been busy this fall!** As she works to design and implement a SNAP and WIC Outreach Pilot Program with partners in Framingham, Hudson, and Milford, she has begun holding drop-in hours at community partner sites. She is also available to respond to direct inquiries, and has been joining Kali to table at various area events.

If you are interested in serving as a partner site for SNAP and WIC outreach, connect with Giuliana directly. You can also help community members connect with her by visiting her Linktree to get in touch. Or, you can download and print Giuliana's rack card to distribute (available in English | Portuguese | Spanish).

## A FUN AND FOOD-FILLED FALL

**It was a busy fall for the MetroWest Food Collaborative, filled with community events focused on all things food, health, and fun.**

Some of our highlights included RECFest, the Flu/Covid Clinic at Hudson High School, the Fall Fest at ATAC, Senate President Spilka's 55+ Fair, Downtown Framingham Adult Resource Fair, the Hudson High Open House and Open Table's Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event.

What a whirlwind! If you missed our recaps, check out our socials for more.



# WORKING GROUP UPDATES

## A FRESH FOCUS FOR OUR WORKING GROUPS

We recently reorganized our Working Groups to cover two focus areas, with a stronger emphasis on completing key activities that advance our annual priorities. The two current working groups are:

- **Advocacy Working Group:** helps plan the annual Food Access Summit, hosts an advocacy training, supports coalition campaigns, and supports community involvement in advocacy.
- **Community Engagement Working Group:** helps identify and connect with community partners for SNAP & WIC outreach, and helps track impact on closing the regional SNAP & WIC gaps.

Learn more on our [Working Groups page](#) and [email us](#) to get involved.

## SPEAKING OUT FOR HIP FUNDING

One key coalition campaign we are supporting right now is the **effort to restore HIP benefits to the monthly allocations that were in place before they were slashed to \$20/household** (regardless of size) due to a budget shortfall.

MWFC joined 100 partners and community advocates, including Small Farm (Bolton), World Farmers (Lancaster), MA Food System Collaborative, and Greater Boston Food Bank at the State House in November, urging legislators to allocate funding to stop HIP cuts. While there, they met with the offices of Senate President Spilka, Senator Eldridge, Speaker Pro Tempore Hogan and Rep. Sousa. Kali and Rebecca Miller from the MA Food System Collaborative also organized a visit with Rep. Lewis and Senate President Spilka (who have historically been supportive of HIP) at the Ashland Farmers Market. They discussed the impact of impending HIP cuts with Farm Manager Laura Raney from Silverwood Organic Farm.




***Interested in joining a working group?***

Email us at: [MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com](mailto:MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com)

# PARTNER UPDATES

## NEED FOOD? CHECK OUT SPOONFULS!

 **spoonfuls** is a nonprofit food recovery organization headquartered in Newton and working across MA to distribute still-good, unsold, fresh food sourced from grocery stores, wholesalers, and farms. It makes food deliveries, free of charge, to community programs that reach people facing food insecurity.

**Spoonfuls' team is eager to connect with MetroWest organizations interested in receiving occasional or regular deliveries.** If you are interested, please complete this [Inquiry Form](#)!

## VOICES OF THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Voices of the Community, led by Margie Rosario, **recently held a workshop titled ACCESS: Authentic Community Engagement for Addressing Health Disparities and Social Determinants of Health.** As a member of the Community Engagement Model (CEM) Affinity Group, Kali presented on applying the CEM framework in food system work. Giuliana and Kali enjoyed participating in the workshop and connecting with likeminded organizations throughout MW!



## JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN MW

Natick Service Council is currently **seeking a Program Coordinator and a JEDI Outreach Specialist.** Do you know someone who might be a good fit? Check out the [job descriptions](#) linked here!

## CHANGES TO FOOD ACCESS FLYERS & HOLIDAY CALENDARS



Due to demand pressures, some pantries in our region have made the difficult decision to update the towns they serve. **We have reflected these changes on the [food access flyers](#) on our website - please make sure to use the most recent versions!**

As the holiday season approaches, many providers adjust their hours for late December and early January. We have added any changes shared with us to our [monthly calendars](#) (in English, Spanish, Portuguese) for MW residents to refer to!

***Want an update shared with our network?***

Email us at: [MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com](mailto:MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com)

# ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

## 1 STOP HIP CUTS

Though cuts to HIP (to \$20/household regardless of size) went into effect earlier this month, state leaders still have an opportunity to reinstate full HIP benefits by committing an additional \$10 million for the program via the FY 2025 supplemental budget.

We need all hands on deck to reach out the Speaker of the House and the House Ways and Means Chair about the effect that this cut is having on you, your neighbors, farms and farmers markets in your area.

Please use [this template for outreach](#) and use your voice to help reverse the cuts to this critical program, which impact low-income residents, local farms, and our entire food system!



## 2 FEDERAL FARM BILL

The Farm Bill is a comprehensive package of legislation passed once every five years that has a direct impact on agriculture, food systems, and consumers. It covers programs ranging from crop insurance for farmers to healthy food access for low-income families.

The Farm Bill has different sections — known as titles — that can change over time. The 2018 Farm Bill had 12 titles. Out of those 12 titles, Title Four: Nutrition, is the most relevant for anti-hunger advocates. **The Nutrition title covers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), as well as a variety of smaller nutrition programs to help individuals and families with low-incomes afford food.**

Use the [FRAC Action Network](#) to quickly and easily contact your Member of Congress and urge them to oppose efforts to weaken or cut SNAP to finance other provisions in the Farm Bill. You can also learn more about the Farm Bill [here](#).

## Questions about Advocacy?

Contact us: [MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com](mailto:MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com)

# RESOURCES FOR YOU

**Updated!**

## **Food Access Calendars & Food Resource Flyers by City/Town**

*(In English, Spanish, Portuguese,  
and Haitian Creole)*

[Click here](#)

**New!**

## **Connect with Giuliana for SNAP/WIC help**

[Click here](#)

## **Local Farmers' Markets Info & Educational Flyers**

[Click here](#)

## **Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline: 1-800-645-8333**

Monday-Friday: 8am-7pm  
Saturday: 10am - 2pm

*Assistance in 180 languages.*

## **Trouble with SNAP? Get Help When you Can't Reach DTA**

[Click here](#)

## **What to Do If You've Experienced Benefit Theft**

[Click here](#)