



SPRING 2024

# METROWEST FOOD COLLABORATIVE NEWSLETTER

*Dear MetroWest Community,*

*As we head into the summer months, I am excited to share with you the Spring edition of our quarterly newsletter. Read on for some highlights of what MetroWest Food Collaborative (MWFC) worked on in March through May, including State Budget advocacy, hosting a Lunch and Learn, and distributing 15 mini-grants. Then, learn more about what is coming next and how you can plug in!*

*Wishing you all a sunny June,*

**Kali Coughlan**  
MetroWest Food Collaborative Coordinator



## In the News

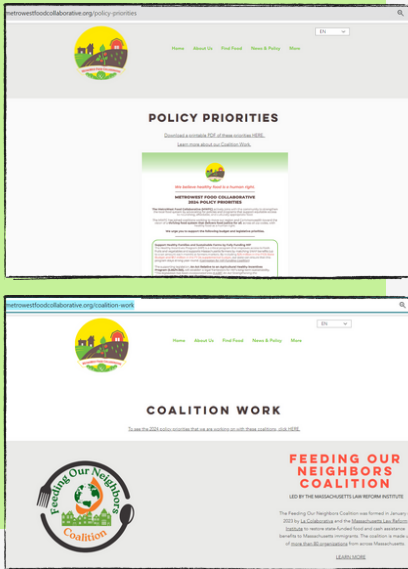
- **The Massachusetts State Budget process is close to winding up. Check out our latest [blog post](#) for a deep dive** into how this relates to our food equity priorities - and then check out the Advocacy section of this newsletter for the latest actions you can take!
- The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative has also been covering the **latest budget news around food access and equity**. [Have a look here](#).
- **It's farmer's market season!** Check out this year's opening dates and times on our website, [here](#). Most markets take SNAP and HIP.
- **School's (nearly) out and summer meals resources are on their way.** Visit the [state website](#) for information about Summer EBT, and [Project Bread's website](#) for information about Summer Eats sites!

# MWFC UPDATES

## REFRESHING OUR WEBSITE

Over the past couple of months, we have been updating our website to better reflect our advocacy work and partnerships. You can **check out our updated Policy Priorities page and our new Coalition Work page** to learn more. And make sure to read our latest blog post!

We've also added 2024 farmers' market season dates, consolidated our Working Group page, and made sure our content is up to date across all three languages: Spanish, Portuguese, and English.



## SPEAKING OUT FOR FOOD EQUITY

Throughout the spring, MWFC reached out to our legislators about our coalitions' budget and policy priorities. **In March, Kali attended the annual HIP Lobby Day at the MA State House**, where she met with several legislators. Since then, we have continued to urge legislators to support key budget items and amendments.

**Kali also tabled at the Hudson Health & Wellness Fair**, where community members shared paper plate messages about what community food access means to them.



## AMPLIFYING OUR EFFORTS

We are thrilled to share that our contractor, **Maggie**, has agreed to stay to support our outreach and communications for a second contract period! Remember to follow us on our socials to see some of the content she has been creating and promoting.



# MWFC WORKING GROUP UPDATES

## UNIFYING OUR GROUPS

We recently combined our existing working groups under one umbrella, as we continue to advance three priority areas: Food Equity & Justice, Healthy Food Access, and Community Engagement. **We meet at 12pm on the 4th Thursday of the month.** All are welcome to join! [Learn more here.](#)



## PROJECT LUNCH & LEARN

In April, we facilitated a Lunch & Learn on Dignity in Food Choice, hosted by the MetroWest Nonprofit Network. Panelists **Joanne Barry from A Place To Turn, Dan Shea from Natick Service Council, and Erica Solitro from Project Just Because** helped us consider challenges, resources, and strategies involved in creating a dignified shopping experience.

We are publishing bite-sized clips from the event on our socials. **[Check out the first one!](#)**

## AWARDING MINI-GRANTS

We are thrilled that MWFC was able to award **mini-grants of up to \$1,500 to 15 MetroWest organizations working to address dignity in food choice for older adults!** Our 2024 recipients are: Grace House, Daniel's Table, Catholic Charities Worcester County, Natick Service Council, Project Just Because, Marlborough Senior Center, Ashland Farmers Market, HOPE Worldwide MA Framingham Food Pantry, Hopkinton Senior Services, Springwell, Greater Framingham Community Church, Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center, Open Table, United Way of Tri-County and MetroWest Worker Center - CASA. **[Check out our socials for more!](#)**



***Interested in joining our working group?***

Email us at: **MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com**

# ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

## 1 Speak out for food access!

**There's still time to take action to strengthen food equity funding in the MA State Budget.** Right now, the Budget is in Conference Committee, where a small group of legislators from the House and Senate are reconciling differences between the versions released by the two chambers. ([See our blog for reference](#)). We are urging them to adopt the strongest language and funding for our FY25 budget priorities, including:

- \$20 million and language to support year-round operations for HIP
- \$190 million for Universal School Meals
- \$250,000 for local Food Policy Council grants
- \$214 million for robust Regional Transit Authority (RTA) funding

You can primarily direct emails to:

- Representative Aaron Michlewitz, Chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means, [Aaron.M.Michlewitz@mahouse.gov](mailto:Aaron.M.Michlewitz@mahouse.gov)
- Senator Michael Rodrigues, Chairman, Senate Committee on Ways and Means, [Michael.Rodrigues@masenate.gov](mailto:Michael.Rodrigues@masenate.gov)
- Senate President Karen Spilka, [Karen.Spilka@masenate.gov](mailto:Karen.Spilka@masenate.gov)
- Make sure to copy *your own State Representative and Senator* in your emails!

You can also reach out to the other four Committee members: Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante, Representative Todd Smola, Senator Cindy Friedman, and Senator Patrick O'Connor.



## Helpful Links

[Find and contact your MA state legislators](#)  
[HERE](#)

[Contact the Governor's Office](#)  
[HERE](#)

[Find and contact your US Congress member](#)  
[HERE](#)

[Contact your US Senators](#) [HERE](#)

## Questions about Advocacy?

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

# MORE ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES



## 2 Thank your Legislators

Did your legislator support or champion food equity in the State Budget?

Take a moment to thank them for their efforts! [Find and contact your MA state legislators HERE.](#)

## 3 Spread HIP Awareness

To ensure that the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) remains a state funding priority, we need to keep raising awareness about the program's benefits - from promoting accessible fresh produce for all SNAP users, to supporting local farms.

Here's how you can help:

- Download and share our [educational flyers](#).
- Want to partner with us to invite legislators to see HIP in action at a your local market? Reach out to us at: [MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com](mailto:MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com)



## Questions about Advocacy?

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

# RESOURCES FOR YOU

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

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

[Click here](#)

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

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

*Assistance in 180 languages.*

## Local Farmers' Markets Info & Educational Flyers

[Click here](#)

## Community Supported Agriculture

[Click here](#)

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

[Click here](#)

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

[Click here](#)

## Find information about Summer EBT

[Click here](#)

## Find a Summer Eats meals site near you

[Click here](#)