



WINTER 2024

# METROWEST FOOD COLLABORATIVE NEWSLETTER

***Dear MetroWest Community,***

*With the first month of 2024 behind us, I am excited to share with you the MetroWest Food Collaborative's (MWFC) second quarterly newsletter! From hosting our 2nd Annual Food Access Summit, to gearing up our advocacy on key budget and policy priorities to support food equity, it's been a busy season - and we are just getting started. Read on to learn what we are up to, find helpful resources, and see how you can get involved.*

*With gratitude,*

***Kali Coughlan***  
*MetroWest Food Collaborative Coordinator*



## **In the News**

- Governor Healey's proposed FY25 MA State Budget included:
  - **\$25M to fully fund [HIP](#)**
  - **\$170M for [Universal School Meals](#) (though more is still needed)**
  - **\$150M for Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)**
  - Learn more: check out the Governor's [FY25 budget briefs](#)
- In December, the MA Legislature passed and the Governor signed a "**Supplemental Budget**" that included **\$6M to [restore critical state SNAP benefits](#) for legally-present immigrants** who are barred from federal SNAP benefits. *Check out our Advocacy section for next steps!*
- The **MWRTA is offering fare-free options** through March, and has launched a **new Sunday fixed-route bus service!** [Learn more here.](#)

# MWFC UPDATES



## A SUCCESSFUL SUMMIT

On January 25th, MWFC hosted our 2nd Annual Food Access Summit at the Hudson Town Hall. This year's Summit focused on the critical issue of food insecurity among older adults in our communities, with speakers spanning our federal and state legislators, state agencies, and area providers. [See the full list of speakers and photos here](#) and [watch the recording here](#). Thanks to the hard work of many, the event was a powerful



and meaningful convening space for partners working to advance equitable food access across the MetroWest region.

## SPEAKING OUT FOR TRANSPORTATION EQUITY

Kali recently testified in support of H.3272/S.227, An Act to Increase Regional Transit Accessibility in the Commonwealth. Expanding access to public transportation is a key part of advancing food access. [Check out her testimony here to learn more about why MWFC supports this bill - and how you can support it too!](#)



## MEET MAGGIE, OUR NEW CONTRACTOR



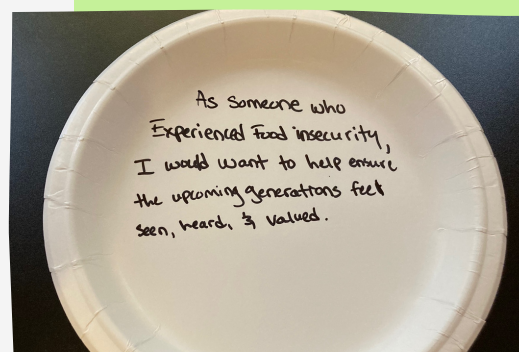
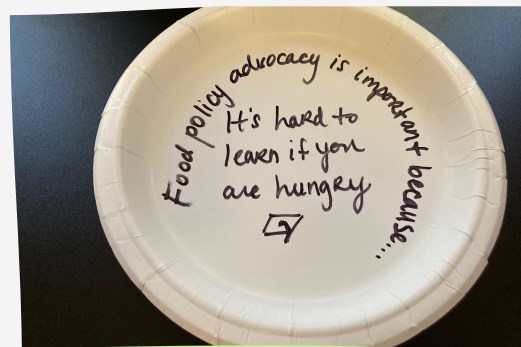
After recently working for a multi-issue grassroots advocacy organization in VT, Maggie is excited to return to working in support of food access in MA, as a contractor with MWFC. She has previously held roles with the Worcester County Food Bank and the Regional Environmental Council in Central Massachusetts, and helped coordinate a pop-up food pantry during COVID.



# MWFC WORKING GROUP UPDATES

## FOOD EQUITY & JUSTICE

- On January 10th, MWFC hosted a policy advocacy training with 12 of our members, to prepare ourselves to speak out for food access and equity this legislative year. As part of the training, participants responded to prompts on paper plates, which were shared with legislators during the Food Access Summit. [See their responses here.](#)
- **Save the Date:** We are planning a Lunch and Learn with the MetroWest Nonprofit Network on Dignity in Food Choice for April 24th - [Register today!](#)



## HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

Last year, we developed printable [Food Resource Fliers](#) listing pantries and meal programs for all eight MetroWest municipalities, in collaboration with the area providers who run these programs. They were initially available in three languages - English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and [we have now been able to add a fourth language: Haitian Creole!](#) This was made possible thanks to funding from last year's earmarks secured by Speaker Pro Tempore Hogan and Senate President Spilka and grants from the MetroWest Health Foundation & the Sudbury Foundation.

**DID YOU KNOW... ?**  
OUR FOOD RESOURCE FLIERS ARE NOW AVAILABLE IN 4 LANGUAGES!

ENGLISH  
PORTUGUESE / PORTUGUÊS  
SPANISH / ESPAÑOL  
HAITIAN CREOLE / KREYÒL AYISYEN

Head to the MWFC website (link in bio) & click on "Find Food." Scroll down to find links to a printable PDF for your municipality in the MetroWest region!

**Interested in joining a working group?**

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

# ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

## 1 Speak out for food access!

Let your MA state legislators know that you support the following **2024 MWFC priorities**:

- An Act relative to an Agricultural Healthy Incentives Program [S.85/H.150](#)
- [An Act To Increase Regional Transit Accessibility In The Commonwealth](#) (S.2277/H.3272)
- An Act establishing Basic Needs Assistance for Massachusetts immigrant residents [H.135/S.76](#)

**FY25 MA State Budget Priorities:** Continue to fund

- 1.State SNAP Benefits for Legally-Present MA Immigrants\*\*
- 2.MDAR Food Policy Council Grant Program
- 3.Food Literacy
- 4.Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)

You can also **urge your US Congress members** to support the following federal legislation:

- Medically Tailored Home-Delivered Meals Demonstration Pilot Act 2023 [H.R.6780](#)  
(Filed by Rep. McGovern)
- Medical Nutrition Therapy Act of 2023 [S.3297](#)
- The Bridging the SNAP Gap Act [S.2432/ H.R.4185](#)  
(Filed by Sen. Markey and Rep. Trahan)
- Child Care Nutrition Enhancement Act of 2023 ([S.3294](#)  
- thank Senators Warren & Markey for their support,  
[H.R.5569](#) - thank McGovern & encourage co-  
sponsorship by Reps Auchincloss, Trahan and Clark)
- Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act [H.R.6067](#)



## 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](#)

\*\*A note about SNAP benefits for legally-present MA immigrants: the projected cost in FY25 for these nutrition benefits is between \$12-18M. We are urging the Governor and the MA Legislature to adequately fund this critical nutrition benefit.

# MORE ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES



## 2 Thank your Legislators

[Let the Healey administration](#) know you are excited about the \$25 million to fully fund HIP, \$170 million for Universal School Meals, and \$150 million for RTA operating costs included in the proposed FY25 MA State Budget - *and* call for even stronger funding for school meals and equitable programming.

*Bonus: thank your state legislators if they helped advocate for this funding, while urging them to support a budget that fully funds these programs.*

## 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](#).
- Invite your legislator to join you at a market to see HIP in action. Even though it's winter now, the [Natick farmers market](#) is open year round!
- Keep urging your legislators to fully fund this program and to support [S.85/H.150](#).



Fresh. Canned. Dried. Frozen.  
It's **HIP** to be healthy!



## 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](#)

NEW RESOURCE!

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

[Click here](#)

NEW RESOURCE!

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

[Click here](#)