

An Open Letter to Members of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation

December 12, 2016

Dear Senate and House Members of the Massachusetts Delegation:

The undersigned organizations write to thank you for your unwavering support of federal nutrition programs and to urge your resolve to protect and defend these programs against eligibility restrictions and benefits cuts in 2017 and beyond. While we often pay special attention to alleviating hunger during the holiday season, *hunger is a year-round phenomenon for children, low wage working families, seniors and persons with disabilities*. In fact, childhood hunger spikes in the summer (when school is out). Our elder and disabled residents face hunger when they must choose between paying for heat or food, or getting medical treatment. Low-wage working families need nutrition supports to make ends meet. Addressing hunger must be a year-round cause built on the bedrock of the nation's commitment to ending hunger.

There are far too many people in this country – 42 million, including 13 million children – living in households struggling with hunger. USDA's Economic Research Service reports that that 9.7% of the Massachusetts population suffers from food insecurity. Feeding America reports that 1 in 9 Massachusetts residents use feeding programs, but our local food pantries and congregate meal programs report they are already at capacity and cannot absorb any federal cuts.

This problem would be far, far worse were it not for the nation's profoundly successful and cost-effective anti-hunger programs: SNAP (food stamps), school breakfast and lunch, the Child and Adult Care Food Program that pays for children's nutrition in child care, Head Start, afterschool programs and shelters, summer food programs, WIC and TEFAP (emergency food).

We give thanks for these national nutrition programs that reduce hunger and poverty, improve health and learning, improve productivity, create jobs and economic growth, and strengthen our communities. These programs help one in nine people in rural, urban, and suburban areas of Massachusetts including low income seniors, children, people with disabilities, veterans and active duty military families, low-paid workers, unemployed and underemployed adults.

Shortly after the holiday season ends, the new Congress and President-elect Trump will be sworn in and begin making key decisions.

We call on our Massachusetts Delegation to stand together to reject cuts or structural constraints (block grants) to our nation's core anti-hunger programs including SNAP, NSLP, WIC, TEFAP and CACFP. These critical programs are based upon deep and long-standing bipartisan support – rooted in the prevailing notion that nobody in our nation should go hungry. We urge the Massachusetts Delegation to do everything in its power *to protect and defend these federal nutrition programs*, ensure they are fully funded and take steps to assure that all hungry people in our country have access to the nutrition they need to live a healthy, active life. We stand ready to work with you to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

Massachusetts SNAP Coalition **and 103 state, regional and local organizations** including:

Abby Kelley Foster House, Inc., Worcester
Acord Food Pantry, Hamilton
Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.
Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation
Allston Brighton Health Collaborative
American Heart Association and American Stroke Association
American Red Cross of Massachusetts
Amherst Survival Center
Arise for Social Justice, Springfield
Atrius Health, Newton
Baby and Me Learning Together, Amherst
Berkshire Food Project
Beverly Bootstraps
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC)
Boston Centers for Youth & Families
Boston Central Adult High School
Boston Public Health Commission
Brockton Neighborhood Health Center, Inc.
Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, Lowell
Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee
Cambridge Food and Fitness Policy Council
Cambridge Health Alliance, Cambridge/Somerville WIC Program
Cambridge Health Alliance/Cambridge-Somerville WIC Program
Cambridge Public Schools
Cambridge Winter Farmers Market
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Worcester
Center for New Americans
Central West Justice Center
CEOC- Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee, Inc.
Chelmsford Board of Health

Children's HealthWatch
CISA -Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, So. Deerfield
City of Somerville
Coalition for a Better Acre, Lowell
Coalition for Social Justice, Fall River and New Bedford
Community Action Agency of Somerville
Community Servings, Inc.
Daily Bread Food Pantry, Inc. Milford
East Longmeadow Council on Aging
Easthampton Community Center
Elizabeth Freeman Center, Inc., Pittsfield
Food For Free, Cambridge
Food Law and Policy Clinic of Harvard Law School
Greater Boston Legal Services
Greater Lowell Health Alliance
Groundwork Lawrence
Growing Places, Leominster
Health Care With Out Harm, Cambridge
Healthy Chelsea
Healthy Hampshire, Northampton
Human Service Forum, Holyoke
International Institute of New England - Lowell
Jeremiahs Inn Inc., Worcester
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Justice Center of Southeast MA, LLC
Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry, Worcester
Lowell Alliance
Lynn Food and Fitness Alliance
Madison Park Development Corporation, Boston
Massachusetts Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Massachusetts Association of Older Americans, Inc.
Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging
Massachusetts Farm to School, Easthampton
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Massachusetts Public Health Association
Mill City Grows, Lowell
Mt. Zion Baptist Church Soup Kitchen, Springfield
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, Lowell
North Shore Community Action Programs
Northborough Food Pantry
Northbridge Senior Center
Operation A.B.L.E. of Greater Boston, Inc.
Pittsfield Salvation Army
Poor Peoples United Fund, Boston
Project Bread
Quincy Community Action Programs, Inc.
Quinsigamond Community College (QCC)
QCC Culinary Arts Program, Worcester
Revere on the Move
Rockport Council on Aging
Salem Council on Aging
Shape Up Somerville
Single Stop at Bunker Hill Community College
Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences (SCALE)
Springfield Department of Health
Springfield Food Policy Council
St. Mark Community Education Program
St. Francis House, Boston
Stavros, Amherst
The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts

The Food Project, Boston
The Greater Boston Food Bank
The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts
The Latino Health Insurance Program, Inc.
The Open Door, Gloucester
The Trustees, Boston
Triangle Inc., Salem
United Way of Central Massachusetts
Western Massachusetts Training Consortium, Inc.
WHEAT Community Connections, Clinton
Worcester County Food Bank
Worcester Food Policy Council
Worcester Polytechnic Institute