



## Advocacy Priorities: 2021-2022

In the current Massachusetts legislative session, thousands of bills have been filed. The following list includes those which

- relate to or directly affect the work Lovin' Spoonfuls does,
- expand access to healthy food for Massachusetts residents, or
- align with the Core Values of our organization.

We encourage our network and supporters to contact your legislators and encourage them to sign on to support the following bills. To identify your local legislators, please visit: <https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator>.

### **An Act encouraging the donation of food to persons in need**

**SD.385:** Jo Comerford / **HD.1204:** Hannah Kane

Thousands of tons of edible food is sent to landfills each year because of donors' concerns about liability, and because diverting it to those who need it can be costly. This bill will provide civil liability protection for persons who donate food directly to consumers, as well as for food establishments that donate food, and a tax credit to Massachusetts farmers in the amount of the fair market value of the donated food, with a \$2,000 annual cap per farmer.

### **An Act relative to the promotion of food donation**

**HD.2888:** Hannah Kane & Bradley Jones, Jr.

This bill would require the Department of Public Health to issue guidance regarding best practices for food donation, as well as liability protections for food donation. Promoting the donation of food with businesses can help ensure more food is donated.

### **An Act decreasing food waste by standardizing the date labeling of food**

**SD.1338:** Edward Kennedy / **HD.1192:** Hannah Kane

Data labels on food are one of the leading causes of food waste, and this bill would establish guidelines requiring only the usage of “Best If Used By” to represent food quality, and “Expires On” to represent food safety. This would create clarity for consumers and lead to less wasted food.

### **An act supporting the Commonwealth’s food system**

**HD.3588:** Daniel Donahue

Many state agencies play roles in supporting and regulating the food system, but because of limited communication between them some of these efforts are duplicative, inefficient, or even contradictory. The launch of the Food Security Task Force as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for such coordination, but that need is not limited to times of crisis. This bill will establish a state food system coordinator position to serve in an advisory capacity to all agencies to coordinate and inventory food programs, and develop and track metrics related to food system goals.

### **An Act concerning Food Insecurity and Supporting the Restaurant Industry**

**SD 2011:** Edward Kennedy / **HD 2646:** Daniel Donohue

The Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) will allow low income Massachusetts residents who are age 60 or older, have a severe disability or are homeless to use their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT benefits to buy nutritious prepared meals at participating restaurants. Many residents struggle with being able to cook and prepare nutritious meals for themselves, especially if they lack cooking facilities, have mobility challenges and/or difficulty preparing hot food.

### **An Act relative to an agricultural healthy incentives program**

**SD.1179:** Sen. Anne Gobi / **HD.2939:** Rep. Paul Mark

The Healthy Incentives Program leverages federal SNAP funds by incentivizing SNAP recipients’ purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables directly from farmers, improving health outcomes for vulnerable communities and increasing sales for local farms. This bill will establish the framework for the program’s long-term sustainability.

## **An Act to Streamline Access to Critical Public Health and Safety-net Programs through Common Applications**

**SD1015:** Sal DiDomenico / **HD1500:** Jay Livingstone

The SNAP Gap is the difference between the number of low-income Massachusetts residents receiving MassHealth who are likely SNAP eligible and the number of people actually receiving SNAP. In Massachusetts, the size of this gap is over 700,000 residents (based on state data from December 2020). For many years the state has administered these food and health programs separately. This means the application process and collection of documents is duplicated for both Masshealth and SNAP. This creates more work for the state and for low-income households. Most states implement a single eligibility system. It's time to close the SNAP Gap in Massachusetts!

## **An Act Relative to Universal School Meals**

**SD519:** Sal DiDomenico / **HD1161:** Andres X. Vargas

As a result of flexibilities granted in response to the pandemic, every student in Massachusetts currently has access to free school meals. The focus has turned from income verifications and paperwork to simply ensuring that every child has the nutrition that they need. This barrier was temporarily broken down at the federal level because this crisis put a spotlight on the need to ensure the right to the most basic of necessities – food – for all kids.

As we work toward recovery from this crisis and beyond, we cannot let this barrier go back up. We have an opportunity to ensure that all students continue to receive the nutrition they need while they are in school – ending stigma, supporting school nutrition programs, and encouraging success for Massachusetts students.

## **An Act Relative to Establishing a Food and Health Pilot Program**

**SD. 1547:** Julian Cyr / **HD. 2459:** Denise Garlick

This bill would require the Office of Medicaid (MassHealth) to establish a Food and Health Pilot Program that equips health care systems to connect MassHealth enrollees with diet-related health conditions to one of three appropriate nutrition services, with the expectation that health outcomes will improve and cost of care will decrease.

*Thank you to Massachusetts Food Systems Collaborative, Central West Justice Center, Food is Medicine Massachusetts, Project Bread, and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute for sharing these initiatives!*