

Support healthy families and sustainable farms by funding the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) with \$8.5 million: please cosponsor Senator Gobi's Amendment.



HIP provides some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable families with access to fresh, healthy, local foods, and helps to sustain Massachusetts farms by increasing their sales. In doing so, the Program improves health outcomes in low-income communities, supports the local economy, and helps to protect farmland and natural resources.

\$8.5 million for HIP in FY20 will:

Allow the program to operate year-round.

In FY18 and FY19 demand for the program was greater than appropriations could support, so HIP was suspended for several months each year. Suspensions cause confusion, negate the positive impacts of the change in eating habits brought about by the program for customers, and result in lost sales for farmers and increased food insecurity for customers. Fully funding HIP with \$8.5 million will allow farmers to properly plan their crop production, and let customers enjoy the consistent benefits of the program.

Allow for continued growth in participation.

HIP use increased by 25% from FY18 to FY19, but just a small percentage of SNAP households have participated in the program. Fully funding HIP with \$8.5 million will allow for continued growth, so more families can benefit.

Fill geographic gaps in the program.

Due to limited resources, there has been a cap on the approximately 200 farms participating in HIP, despite a waiting list of farms that want to participate. However, there are areas of the state with no farms or markets currently participating. Fully funding HIP with \$8.5 million will allow for select additional farms to begin participating in the program in areas of the state that are currently underserved by HIP.

Since HIP launched in April 2017:



More than **55,000 families** have participated in **HIP**, improving health outcomes for low-income communities and reducing costs for the public health system.



More than **\$9 million in local produce** has been **purchased from Massachusetts farmers**, who reinvest that money in the MA economy by purchasing local goods and services, and who steward natural resources for the benefit of all residents.



The Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) provides a matching incentive for SNAP recipients' purchases of locally-grown fruits and vegetables directly from farmers at participating farmers' markets, farmstands, mobile markets, and community supported agriculture programs (CSAs). The SNAP recipient swipes their EBT card to make a purchase, and the value of that purchase is immediately added back to the monthly allowance on their card, up to a monthly limit depending upon household size (\$40 for a family of two or fewer, \$60 for a 3-5 person family, and \$80 for families with six or more members).

The Department of Transitional Assistance administers HIP, in partnership with the Department of Agricultural Resources and the Department of Public Health.

The program has been tremendously successful, experiencing far more demand than had been initially projected. The state's investments thus far have supported HIP through part of each year, but have not been adequate to operate the program year-round. For the program to have its intended effects of changing the eating habits of families and improving their overall health, a consistent, year-round program is needed. At the same time, farmers rely on a predictable market to know how to plan their crops each year, and funding HIP year-round will provide that consistency.

For more information about the Campaign for HIP Funding, contact winton@mafoodsystem.org, or see www.hipma.org.

