



September 12, 2023

Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Rooms 507 & 146
Boston MA 02133

RE: S.76 / H.135 An Act Establishing Basic Needs Assistance for Massachusetts Immigrant Residents

Dear Chairs Kennedy and Livingstone, and members of the Committee:

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative is pleased to offer this testimony in support of S.76/H.135, An act establishing basic needs assistance for Massachusetts immigrant residents.

This bill would restore state funded food and income assistance benefits for low-income, legally present immigrants seeking to settle and contribute to the economy of the Commonwealth. Five other states (California, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota and Washington) administer state-funded benefit programs for some immigrants ineligible for SNAP. Massachusetts administered this program from 1997 to 2002, after federal welfare reform was passed that rolled back eligibility for immigrant residents. Food assistance programs have a demonstrated multiplier effect on the local economy; as MLRI estimates the first year of this program would cost \$18 million, which would lead to \$27 million in economic activity across the Commonwealth.¹ These residents are also ineligible for the Healthy Incentives Program, creating confusion for caseworkers and recipients and inequities in who can access this important benefit.

The Collaborative is a network of Massachusetts food system organizations, working to promote, monitor, and facilitate implementation of the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan (<http://mafoodsystem.org/plan/>). The Plan was developed for and accepted by the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, a 17-member entity comprising state agency, legislative, and industry representatives, established by the Legislature and Governor to develop recommendations, including legislative and regulatory changes, to promote sustainability and equity in the Commonwealth's food system.

We respectfully request that the Committee favorably report out this legislation.
Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

¹ https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_massachusetts.pdf



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