



Massachusetts Food System Collaborative 2024 State Representative and Senator Questionnaire

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What are three of your priorities that reflect your commitment to a healthy food system for Massachusetts and your constituents?

Priority 1

Supporting Local Farmers and Sustainable Agriculture

Investment in Education and Technical Assistance: I will advocate for increased funding for programs such as UMass Extension to provide critical technical assistance and educational resources to farmers. This will help them adopt sustainable practices, improve crop yields, and manage environmental challenges.

Expanding the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) Program: By ensuring continuous funding of \$25 million per year, we can support farms with the necessary capital to improve infrastructure, adopt climate-resilient practices, and boost production. Special attention will be given to accommodating smaller farms and businesses through flexible grant programs.

Priority 2

Enhancing Food Security and Access to Healthy Food

Fully Funding the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP): The HIP program has shown remarkable success in providing fresh, healthy, local food to low-income households while supporting local farmers. I will push for full funding to operate HIP year-round, expand the number of participating farmers, and increase awareness among SNAP households.

Strengthening the Massachusetts Food Trust: This program provides vital loans, grants, and business assistance to increase access to healthy, affordable food in underserved areas. By increasing its funding, we can ensure more communities benefit from this essential resource.



Priority 3

Promoting Food Literacy and Education

Integrating Food Literacy into Statewide Education Standards: To create a lasting impact on our food system, we must start with education. I will advocate for the integration of a comprehensive food literacy framework into K-12 education standards. This will equip students with essential knowledge about nutrition, food production, and sustainable practices.

Supporting Professional Development for Educators: Providing funding for professional development and dedicated food system education coordinators at the state and district levels will ensure that teachers are well-equipped to deliver high-quality food education.

How would you support the Healthy Incentives Program?

Comprehensive Support for the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP):

1. Securing Full Funding for Year-Round Operation

Legislative Advocacy: I will champion the cause of HIP in the legislature, advocating for full funding to ensure the program operates year-round. This includes pushing for budget allocations that reflect the program's importance in providing fresh, healthy, local food to low-income families.

Collaborating with Stakeholders: Working closely with local farmers, SNAP recipients, and community organizations, I will gather support and testimonies to present a compelling case for consistent funding. This collaborative approach will highlight the program's dual benefits for public health and local agriculture.

2. Expanding Farmer Participation and Awareness

Increasing Farmer Enrollment: By simplifying the application process and offering technical assistance, I will encourage more farmers across Massachusetts to join HIP. This will not only enhance the program's reach but also boost local farm economies.

Promoting the Program: Partnering with local organizations, I will initiate awareness campaigns to educate SNAP households about the benefits of HIP and how to utilize it. These campaigns will use various media channels to ensure broad dissemination of information.

3. Enhancing Program Infrastructure



Improving Market Access: I will advocate for investments in infrastructure that facilitate direct-to-consumer sales, such as farmers' markets and mobile markets. This will make it easier for SNAP recipients to access fresh, local produce.

Supporting Technology Upgrades: Ensuring that farmers have access to the necessary technology to process HIP transactions efficiently is crucial. I will support initiatives that provide grants or low-interest loans for technology upgrades.

Addressing Broader Food System Issues:

1. Increasing Food Security

Strengthening the Massachusetts Food Trust: By increasing funding and expanding the reach of the Massachusetts Food Trust, we can ensure that more underserved areas have access to healthy, affordable food. This will address food deserts and improve overall food security in the state.

Supporting Universal School Meals: I will back the implementation of universal school meals to ensure that all children have access to nutritious food, which is essential for their growth and learning.

2. Supporting Sustainable Agriculture

Promoting Climate-Resilient Practices: I will push for policies that incentivize sustainable farming practices, such as no-till farming, efficient irrigation, and cover cropping. These practices not only improve yields but also enhance environmental sustainability.

Investing in Research and Development: Supporting the UMass Extension and other research institutions will provide farmers with the latest knowledge and techniques to adapt to changing climate conditions and market demands.

3. Enhancing Food Literacy

Integrating Food Education in Schools: By promoting food literacy programs in K-12 education, we can ensure that the next generation understands the importance of healthy eating, sustainable agriculture, and food justice. This will create a more informed and engaged citizenry.

In summary, my approach to supporting the Healthy Incentives Program and addressing broader food system issues will be comprehensive and collaborative. By securing full funding, expanding participation, and enhancing infrastructure, we can ensure that HIP continues to benefit both low-income families and local farmers. Additionally, addressing food security,



promoting sustainable agriculture, and enhancing food literacy will create a resilient and equitable food system for all residents of Massachusetts.

How would you support the food system in mitigating the effects of and adapting to climate change?

How would you work to ensure that food system stakeholders of color - consumers, workers, farmers, fishers, business owners, and others - have equitable access to opportunities in all aspects of the food system?

As a candidate committed to improving the local food system, my approach will focus on practical and sustainable solutions that address food security, support local farmers, and enhance community health. Here's how I plan to tackle these issues:

1. Enhancing Food Security

Support and Expand HIP: I will work to secure consistent, year-round funding for the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), which has proven to be effective in providing fresh, healthy food to low-income families while supporting local farmers. Ensuring full funding and expanding the program to include more farmers and markets is crucial.

Promote SNAP Integration: I will advocate for the implementation of the common application for SNAP and other assistance programs to increase accessibility and usage among eligible households. This integration will streamline the application process and ensure that more families receive the support they need.

2. Supporting Local Farmers and Sustainable Agriculture

Increase Funding for UMass Extension and Technical Assistance: By advocating for increased funding for UMass Extension, I aim to provide farmers with the necessary resources and education to adopt sustainable and innovative farming practices. This support will help farmers increase their productivity and resilience in the face of climate challenges.

Expand the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) Program: I will push for continuous funding of the FSIG program, prioritizing grants for small and mid-sized farms. This funding will enable farmers to invest in infrastructure improvements, adopt climate-resilient practices, and enhance their overall sustainability.

3. Promoting Food Literacy and Education



Integrate Food Literacy into School Curriculums: I will advocate for the integration of food literacy education into K-12 curriculums statewide. This initiative will teach students about nutrition, food production, and sustainable practices, preparing them to make informed choices and support local food systems.

Support Professional Development for Educators: Providing funding for professional development and food system education coordinator positions at the state and district levels will ensure that educators are well-equipped to teach food literacy effectively.

Supporting the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP)

1. Securing Full Funding for Year-Round Operation

Legislative Advocacy: I will champion HIP in the legislature, advocating for full funding to ensure it operates year-round. This includes lobbying for budget allocations that reflect the program's critical role in providing fresh, healthy, local food to low-income families.

Building Coalitions: I will work with a coalition of local farmers, community organizations, and health advocates to gather support and present compelling evidence of HIP's benefits to secure sustained funding.

2. Expanding Farmer Participation and Awareness

Simplifying Enrollment Processes: I will push for simplified application processes and provide technical assistance to help more farmers participate in HIP. This will broaden the program's reach and support a greater number of local farmers.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Partnering with community organizations, I will initiate campaigns to educate SNAP recipients about HIP and how to maximize their benefits. Utilizing various media channels will ensure widespread dissemination of information.

3. Enhancing Program Infrastructure

Improving Market Access: I will advocate for investments in infrastructure that facilitate direct-to-consumer sales, such as farmers' markets and mobile markets. This will improve access to fresh produce for SNAP recipients and support local agriculture.

Supporting Technology Upgrades: Ensuring farmers have access to the necessary technology to process HIP transactions efficiently is crucial. I will support initiatives that provide grants or low-interest loans for technology upgrades.

By addressing these key issues and supporting programs like HIP, I aim to create a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable food system in Massachusetts. This approach will not only improve food security but also strengthen the local economy and promote public health.



How would you help to ensure that children understand where food comes from, the importance of healthy eating, and other essential food literacy issues?

Ensuring that children understand where food comes from, the importance of healthy eating, and other essential food literacy issues is a crucial part of building a healthy future for our communities. As a candidate for the Massachusetts General Court, here is how I would approach this issue:

1. Integrating Food Literacy into School Curriculums

Statewide Education Standards: I will advocate for the integration of a comprehensive food literacy framework into statewide K-12 education standards. This framework will cover topics such as agriculture, nutrition, food justice, and culinary skills. By embedding these topics into the curriculum, we can ensure that every student has access to this vital knowledge.

Professional Development for Educators: Supporting teachers is key to the successful implementation of food literacy education. I will push for funding to provide professional development opportunities for educators, helping them incorporate food system education into their teaching practices. This includes training workshops, access to resources, and continuous support from food literacy experts.

2. Supporting Hands-On Learning Opportunities

School Gardens and Field Trips: I will promote the development and maintenance of school gardens, which offer students hands-on experiences with growing food. Additionally, I will support funding for field trips to farms, farmers' markets, and food production facilities, providing students with real-world insights into the food system.

Collaborations with Local Organizations: Partnering with local food organizations and farms can enhance educational programs. Organizations such as the Massachusetts Farm to School program and various community gardens can offer valuable resources and expertise to schools, enriching students' learning experiences.

3. Enhancing Community and Parental Involvement

Community Events and Workshops: Organizing community events and workshops focused on food literacy can engage students and their families. These events can include cooking demonstrations, nutrition workshops, and gardening classes, fostering a community-wide understanding of healthy eating and food sources.

Parental Engagement: Encouraging parental involvement in food literacy education is essential. I will support initiatives that provide parents with the tools and knowledge to reinforce these lessons at home, creating a holistic approach to food education.



4. Legislative and Policy Support

Supporting Relevant Legislation: I will back legislative efforts such as the proposed Act to promote food literacy (S.2588 and H.601), which aims to add food literacy to the school curriculum, provide resources for educators, and establish a Food Literacy Trust Fund. This legislation is crucial for formalizing and funding food literacy education across the state.

Funding and Resources: Ensuring that there is adequate funding for food literacy programs is a priority. I will advocate for budget allocations that support these initiatives, including the continuation and expansion of grants like the Farming Reinforces Education and Student Health (FRESH) grant, which funds educational field trips and professional development for educators.

By taking these steps, we can ensure that children in Massachusetts not only understand where their food comes from but also appreciate the importance of healthy eating and the broader implications of the food system. This comprehensive approach will help build a generation that is knowledgeable about food, health-conscious, and supportive of sustainable practices.

What policies or investments would you support to protect farmland and increase farmland access?

To protect farmland and increase access, I would support the following policies and investments, based on the goals outlined in the Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan:

1. Farmland Protection

Enhanced APR Program: Advocate for increased funding and coordination with federal partners to protect more farmland through the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program. This includes measures to protect on-farm housing and streamline application processes.

MDAR Buy/Protect/Sell Program: Support the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) in purchasing, protecting, and reselling farmland to ensure its continued agricultural use.

2. Increasing Farmland Access

Alternative Land Tenure Methods: Promote novel land tenure approaches to assist beginning farmers,

Public Land for Agriculture: Advocate for policies that make more public land available for agricultural use, prioritizing access for disadvantaged farmers.



3. Supporting Farm Viability

Climate Resilience and Urban Agriculture: Invest in programs that support climate change adaptation, urban agriculture, and sustainable farming practices. This includes providing technical assistance and financial support to farmers to adopt resilient farming techniques.

Education and Outreach: Develop educational programs to raise awareness about the importance of local agriculture among residents and policymakers, integrating these topics into K-12 curricula.

4. Financial and Technical Support

Utilize Existing Funds: Ensure that already authorized funds, such as the \$24 million from previous environmental bonds, are fully utilized to support farmland protection programs.

Creative Financing Solutions: Explore and implement creative financing options to support farmland conservation and access, ensuring that these efforts receive sustained financial backing.

By implementing these policies and investments, we can ensure that Massachusetts' farmland is protected, accessible, and viable for future generations. This comprehensive approach will address the challenges faced by local farmers and support a sustainable food system

What strategies would you support to reduce food waste?

Reducing food waste is a critical issue with significant environmental, economic, and social impacts. Here are several strategies I would support to address food waste effectively:

1. Ban on Food Scraps Disposal

Legislative Action: Support the implementation of a statewide ban on food scraps disposal in landfills. This would require comprehensive educational, technical, and financial support for individuals and businesses to comply with the ban.

2. Support for Food Donation

Liability Protections and Tax Incentives: Advocate for policies that provide civil liability protection for food donors and tax credits for farmers donating food. This can help divert edible food from landfills to those in need, addressing both food waste and food insecurity simultaneously.

3. Infrastructure for Food Waste Management

Investment in Composting and Anaerobic Digestion: Promote and fund the development of composting facilities and anaerobic digesters. These technologies convert food waste into



valuable resources such as compost and renewable energy, reducing methane emissions from landfills and supporting sustainable agriculture.

On-Farm Composting: Provide increased grant funding and technical assistance to support on-farm composting operations, allowing farmers to turn food waste into compost for their fields.

4. Consumer Education and Advocacy

Public Awareness Campaigns: Launch statewide campaigns to educate consumers on the importance of reducing food waste. These campaigns can provide tips on proper food storage, meal planning, and the benefits of composting.

School Programs: Institutionalize food waste separation and composting programs in schools to teach students about the importance of reducing waste and recycling organic materials.

5. Support for Food Waste Reduction Organizations

Strengthening the Food Waste Reduction Network: Support the collaborative efforts of food rescue organizations, gleaning groups, and environmental organizations through the Food Waste Reduction Network. This network facilitates information sharing, advocacy, and partnership building across the sector to enhance food waste reduction efforts statewide.

6. Municipal and Regional Planning

Incentives for Municipalities: Encourage municipalities and regional planning agencies to develop local food waste reduction plans. These plans should reflect local opportunities and priorities and provide the necessary support for effective implementation.

By implementing these strategies, we can make significant strides in reducing food waste in Massachusetts, benefiting both our environment and our communities.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Not really. I am approaching the issue of the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative from an outside perspective, with most of my knowledge coming from internet-based research. However, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to organizations like yours. Growing up, my single mother raised four kids, and it was thanks to the support from such organizations that we were able to put food on our table. I am grateful beyond what words can express.

Additionally, I deeply appreciate the work you do to support local farmers. Your efforts in providing resources, education, and advocacy help ensure that farmers can continue their vital work of producing food for our communities. Supporting farmers is not just about agriculture; it's about sustaining our local economy, preserving our environment, and maintaining a resilient food system. Thank you for all that you do.