



**Massachusetts Food System Collaborative
2024 State Representative and Senator Questionnaire**

Your name: Kimberly Ferguson

Office Sought, including district: State Representative, 1st Worcester

Website:

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

Priority 1

Continuing the work of strengthening and growing our local food system

Priority 2

Continuing to advocate and support policies and increased funding for food insecurity, school meals programs, local food resources and related areas of need

Priority 3

Continuing to advocate for and support legislation and funding related to our farms, HIP, SNAP and agricultural issue including healthy soils and reducing contaminants.

How would you support the Healthy Incentives Program?

I have had a long history of involvement with supporting the HIP program - through advocacy and budget amendment support. I have been an active member of the Food Systems Caucus at the State House and attend many events, meetings and briefings pertaining to the programs impacting our state and HIP is obviously one of those. I will continue to push for its expanded implementation.

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

Obviously the issue of climate change continues to be a concern for myself and many of my colleagues. I will continue my work regarding awareness, advocacy and support for clear policies that will mitigate the impact felt by climate change and help us avoid further damage. I have also voted in support of many climate packages; I have I sponsored a number annual budget amendments and legislation focusing on climate and farming, mitigation etc.



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?

I absolutely support the work of the Ag Equity Network and believe we need to continue to push for increased support and grant opportunities to facilitate greater inclusion and equity for our BIPOC farmers to sustain their businesses and be able to have opportunity to grow and produce their products to continue to provide more fresh, locally grown products. I am a supporter of H87 An Act Promoting Equity in Agriculture.

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

This is a topic which is also very important to me, due to my background in education. Although I certainly have supported programs and education funding which helps teach our youngest citizens about health, fresh food, agriculture, how our food system works etc, I feel we have much more to do. We need to get students on field trips to visit our farms, farmers markets, and other producers / stewards of the land so they realize the importance of these resources and not only how to protect them and support them, but also to see that MA has opportunities for them in the future. I also think we need to continue to push for funding and increases in funding to support our students and teachers in the schools so that they can continue to learn and experience healthy options, making good choices, and learn about the importance of healthy foods, eating a balanced diet, and where our additional community food resources exist for those who experience food insecurity. I was a long time supporter of the School Meals Program as well as Breakfast After the Bell and voted in favor of both.

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

As a member of the Joint Committee on Agriculture and having many farms in my district, I have learned a great deal about our farmland needs and about issues facing farmers. I have met many times with local farmers and walked their land. I also speak with the Farm Bureau as needed. I certainly am open to supporting many of the goals released in the MA Farmland Action Plan and look forward to implementation. It will take a great deal of focus and commitment on the part of many stakeholders and I am particularly interested in the local options for farmland protection as well as APR changes discussed.



What strategies would you support to reduce food waste?

I definitely believe we have to do more in this area as a state, and even raising awareness about it and next steps we need to take has been important. I am familiar with the great work of the Worcester a county Food Bank, Growing Places, and Central MA Grown and we need to continue to provide information, resources, and make connections so that we reduce waste while getting healthy fresh food into the hands of those who are experiencing hunger and food insecurity.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

As a sitting State Representative, I feel that my commitment and dedication to issues surrounding food insecurity, access, and agriculture (to name just a few) have been consistently demonstrated over the years and I would like to continue to be able to support and advocate for the great work that so many have done across the state regarding our food system and related issues. Thank you !