



December 4, 2025

The Honorable Maura Healey, Governor
Massachusetts State House, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Healey,

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative was established to promote, monitor, and facilitate implementation of the [Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan](#), accepted by the state in 2015. The Collaborative supports collective action towards a sustainable, equitable, resilient local food system through our advocacy campaigns and networks. We work with hundreds of food system partners across the Commonwealth who help us identify our state funding priorities. There are a few programs in the annual operating budget that we'd like to bring your attention:

Healthy Incentives Program (4400-1004): \$28,500,000 (level from FY26)

On behalf of the more than 300 member organizations, farms, farmers' markets, and individuals of the Campaign For HIP Funding, we request that you include level funding of \$28.5 million for HIP in your Fiscal Year 2027 budget proposal. We anticipate that \$28.5 million for FY27 should support year-round operation of HIP, including continued growth in participation from SNAP client households. We believe this amount should also be sufficient to allow DTA to add additional farm vendors to the program, and increase communications to SNAP recipients about HIP. Many HIP farmer vendors stopped offering the delivery routes they initiated during the pandemic, and some have gone out of business altogether, decreasing the accessibility and availability of this vital program. Additional vendors must be added to the program to fill these gaps, particularly in the southeastern section of the state, which, according to DTA's monthly fact sheets¹, consistently has the lowest percentage of SNAP households utilizing the benefit. New vendors have not been added to the program since 2022, and there are many that want to join to be able to serve all potential customers, especially former LFPA farmers who already know how to serve diverse, low-income communities they are a part of. While HIP vendors mobilized rapidly in November to make sure SNAP clients know about the HIP benefit with multiple videos² on social media going viral, this is not sustainable for farmers on the front line of the hunger crisis. Communications support from the Department is needed to ensure more clients know about this benefit. HIP is seen by our partners - farmers, nonprofit food system organizations, and individuals with lived experience with food insecurity- from around the state as an essential part of the safety net, and the continued availability of HIP will be even more important as the cruel changes to SNAP from the so-called One Big Beautiful Bill Act come into effect over the next year. We appreciate the Commonwealth's recent investments in DTA staffing and hope this will also assist more clients learning about this benefit.

¹ <https://www.mass.gov/lists/healthy-incentives-program-fact-sheets>

² <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQPCiwIDks7/?igsh=MXIxczN4cTV6M3pvYQ==>



Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (2511-0100): \$10,150,330 (level from FY26)

We urge you to at least level-fund MDAR to continue to allow the agency to meet the needs of the local food system, and farmers around issues related to farmland protection and access, environmental justice, climate change adaptation and mitigation, food security, and more. Under the leadership of Commissioner Randle, MDAR has: put more than 100 acres of state-owned farmland back into production by socially disadvantaged farmers through the land licensing program; established a new, robust Food Security Division that is actively working to foster collaboration so more local food can be provided to food insecure residents; and the Department is promoting the aquaculture industry, the fastest growing segment of agriculture in the state. We know the Healey-Driscoll Administration is considering staff buyouts during this challenging economic outlook and hope that these would not impact core state agency functions.

Anti-Hunger Task Force recommendations

We are grateful to be included as a member of this Task Force and look forward to the release of the recommendations in January. We especially urge you to include a few of these recommendations in your FY27 budget proposal, such as; \$6.4 million for a state Local Food Purchase Assistance program, and \$12.6 million for a local food for schools incentive. Both of these programs were terminated by the federal government in early calendar year 2025.³ Our full list of recommendations can be found on our website.⁴

Each of these requests is a strong fiscal investment for the Commonwealth; for every \$1 that is spent through the Healthy Incentives Program, \$2 in local economic activity is generated.⁵ MDAR staff help conserve land for future generations, increase farm viability and economic activity, and more. And the recommendations from the Task Force will ensure that Massachusetts is prepared for future crisis planning, instead of being forced to respond rapidly when, for example, the federal government shirks its responsibility. Again, we recognize that the state's fiscal outlook is challenging in the face of more than \$3.7 billion⁶ in cuts from the Trump Administration, but we also know that programs that increase food security and support the local food system should grow at a time when the four food banks report sharp increases in the number of residents they serve, and Massachusetts farmers continue to make \$0.95 for every \$1 they invest in their businesses.⁷ Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input. Sincerely,

Rebecca Miller, Policy Director

³<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/10/usda-cancels-local-food-purchasing-for-schools-food-banks-0222796>

⁴ <https://mafoodsystem.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/MAFSC-Anti-Hunger-Task-Force-letter-.pdf>

⁵<https://www.spur.org/publications/research/2021-02-04/economic-contributions-expanding-healthy-food-incentives>

⁶<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/impact-of-trump-administration-and-congressional-cuts-on-massachusetts>

⁷https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Census_by_State/Massachusetts/index.php