

January 25, 2022

The Honorable Anne Gobi, Chair  
The Honorable David Rogers, Chair  
Joint Committee on Higher Education  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02133

Re: S.822 & H.1368 - An Act establishing the Massachusetts hunger-free campus initiative

Dear Chair Gobi, Chair Rogers, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Higher Education,

On behalf of our coalition of anti-hunger advocates and educators, we would like to thank you for your work to ensure that Massachusetts continues to be a leader in Higher Education. From our flagship university to our smaller public institutions, the Commonwealth is truly a model for robust education and academic success. We would also like to thank the committee members who have shown their support for **S.822/H.1368., An Act Establishing the Massachusetts Hunger-Free Campus Initiative** by their cosponsorship.

Although we have some of the most renowned higher education institutions in the country, many students across the Commonwealth suffer from food insecurity on and off campus. Student hunger is detrimental to academic success and is a significant hurdle that disproportionately affects BIPOC, LGBTQ, and student parents. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, 37% of public higher education school students were food insecure. Rates were even higher for black students: 52%, Latino students: 47%, LGBTQ+ students: 46%, and student parents: 53%. Covid has very likely exacerbated student food insecurity, as we have seen with most other measures of food insecurity.

An Act Establishing the Massachusetts Hunger-Free Campus Initiative would create an Office of Capacity Building Services at the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education to provide funding, technical assistance, and grant opportunities to campuses aiming to address food insecurity. It would also:

- Incentivize campuses to leverage existing resources and maximize enrollment in federal nutrition programs
- Encourage campuses to create student-led food insecurity task forces to explore instituting anti-hunger initiatives to be considered for grant funding. These initiatives include meal sharing programs, emergency funds for students to address their basic needs, campus food insecurity surveys, on-campus Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) vendors, and more.

The legislature approved \$1 Million in ARPA funding in December to pilot the Hunger-Free Campus Initiative. Our Coalition leadership has been meeting with the Department of Higher Ed to help facilitate

the grant proposal and distribution process. While we are enormously grateful for this jumpstart, it is imperative we pass the legislation to ensure the success of the initiative and permanently reduce food insecurity amongst our college students.

We ask for your support for **S.822/H.1368, An Act Establishing the Massachusetts Hunger-Free Campus Initiative by favorably recommending it out of your Committee**. Massachusetts continues to be a leader in higher education because of our investments in students. Let's be the generation of leaders to end hunger within our higher education institutions.

Thank you for your service to the Commonwealth and thank you for your consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Laura Sylvester,

On behalf of The Massachusetts Hunger-Free Campus Coalition

The HFCC was formed in the fall of 2019 to address food insecurity among high-need populations enrolled in Massachusetts colleges and universities. It is comprised of over 40 colleges, students, hunger-relief advocates, and anti-poverty organizations.

Action for Boston Community Development  
Amherst Survival Center  
Boston Food Access Council  
Boston Mayor's Office of Food Access  
Bridgewater State University  
Bristol Community College  
Bunker Hill Community College  
Central West Justice Center  
College of the Holy Cross  
Food Bank of Western Massachusetts  
Framingham State University  
Holyoke Community College  
Junior League of Boston  
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
Massasoit Community College  
Merrimack Valley Food Bank  
Middlesex Community College  
North Shore Community College  
One Family, Inc.  
Project Bread

Roxbury Community College  
Salem State University  
Springfield College  
Springfield Technical Community College  
The Greater Boston Food Bank  
The Open Door  
uAspire  
UMass Extension Nutrition Education Program  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
University of Massachusetts, Lowell  
Worcester County Food Bank  
Worcester State University  
YMCA of Greater Boston