



CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
MARTIN J. WALSH

May 28, 2019

Senator Cindy Friedman
Chair, Joint Committee on Healthcare
Financing
State House, Room 413-D
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Jennifer E. Benson
Chair, Joint Committee on Healthcare
Financing
State House, Room 236
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairwoman Friedman, Chairwoman Benson and Members of the Committee:

I write to you today to express my support of H.1173/S.678, *An Act Improving Public Health through a Common Application for Core Food, Health, and Safety-Net Programs*, filed by Representative Livingstone and Senator DiDomenico.

Our vision at the City of Boston is of a thriving, healthy, and innovative City, where there is equality and opportunity for all. We are proud to be the capital city in a Commonwealth that values the same. If passed this legislation would allow an essential resource, SNAP benefits, to be more accessible and equitable to residents of the Commonwealth. Closing the “SNAP Gap” would help individuals and families, immigrants, elders, people with disabilities, working parents and grandparents avoid the choice between eating a healthy meal or heating their home. If passed this bill would streamline access to SNAP benefits for more than 74,000 eligible Bostonians, and nearly 750,000 eligible Massachusetts residents.

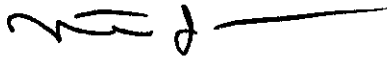
The City of Boston, in partnership with other organizations, promotes farmer’s markets in a collaboration called Farm Fresh Boston, and co-produces the highly in-demand Food Resource List and Map. The SNAP application assistance sites are included on these maps along with farmers markets, food pantries, meal sites, affordable fruit and vegetable sources, and senior dining sites, with information on their access to public transportation. Easing the process for eligible families to sign up for SNAP is a key part of our mission of a thriving and healthy community.

This bill would make healthy food options more available to those who need them. In Boston, one in six residents is food insecure, meaning too many lack reliable access to affordable, healthy food. Communities of color experience food insecurity at a higher rate than Caucasian residents in Boston. Thirty-nine percent of Latino and thirty five percent of Black adults in Boston could not afford to purchase more food when they ran out. Eleven-percent of Caucasian adult residents experienced the same. Furthermore, in Boston seventeen percent of residents receive SNAP benefits.

While costs of food, housing and utilities are on the rise, many residents income remains stagnant. This legislation would help relieve that financial burden. For many residents throughout the Commonwealth, SNAP is the difference between maintaining health or having otherwise preventable diet-related disease; between shopping for food with freedom of choice or with preposterous limitations; between dignity or stigma in accessing food. Thousands of residents are living in the "SNAP Gap."

By eliminating the "SNAP Gap," we can reduce hunger, improve health, and increase the dignity of hard-working families. I respectfully request your support of this bill and thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly or you may reach Alyssa Ring or Yissel Guerrero in the Mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Relations at (617) 635-3817.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. J. Walsh', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Martin J. Walsh
Mayor, City of Boston