

2024 Food Insecurity Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Representative Kathy LaNatra [D]

District: 12th Plymouth House Seat
Halifax, Kingston, Middleborough, Pembroke,
Plymouth, Plympton



1

Why does combatting food insecurity matter to you?

There is no need more fundamental than being able to put healthy, nutritious food on your family's table every night. Food insecurity leads to chronic disease, such as obesity and diabetes and people's inability to access affordable food leads to a strain on their mental health. When folks struggle to afford food, other expenses, such as utilities and health care, are neglected. As a Representative of my constituents, it is a top priority to ensure that no one in my district has to choose between affording a nutritious meal or paying for health insurance.

2

How has food insecurity changed over the past five years in your district?

Like districts across the Commonwealth, food insecurity has been on the rise since the COVID-19 pandemic. Inflation and increasingly high grocery prices have only worsened the problem. When you add in the rising cost of everything else from high housing and rental prices, to the higher cost of health care and all other necessities, people with lower and middle incomes are being squeezed for every penny. Some stores in my district are also closing. Just this past month, we have seen Stop and Shop in Halifax close, leaving people with one less option to shop close to home.

3

In your opinion, what are the primary drivers of food insecurity in your district?

There are two primary drivers of food insecurity in the 12th Plymouth District. First, is the rising cost of living and wages and benefits not keeping up with prices. Many in my district are seniors and live on fixed incomes, which in the face of high inflation, have stagnated and lost purchasing power. This, coupled with the high cost of housing, has squeezed people trying to get by on limited income. Secondly, is the lack of public transportation. For this same demographic, if a constituent doesn't have a car, it can be difficult for them to access healthy food options.

4

What specific policies or legislation do you support to address food insecurity in Massachusetts?

The MA Legislature has made strides in reducing food insecurity, from funding universal schools meals, of which I am a proud supporter and will continue to be into the future, as well as strongly funding the Healthy Incentives Program. There is still far more to do. I have been a strong supporter of incentivizing and supporting the local growers of food right here in the Commonwealth. I have filed legislation to ensure that Food Security Infrastructure grants are going towards individuals and organizations that grow and catch local, nutritious food right here at home.

5

How will you continue to ensure that all your constituents have access to nourishing food?

Food insecurity in my district has been an issue I have been personally involved in for a long time. I have delivered Meals on Wheels to seniors for over a decade, and during COVID, my staff and I regularly volunteered our time at the local food pantry. I will continue to support those doing this important on the ground work. As a legislator, it is a priority of mine to continue to fund programs that are vital to families suffering from food insecurity, such as HIP or Universal School Meals, as well as the FSIG.