

2024 Food Insecurity Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Representative Marjorie Decker [D]

District: 25th Middlesex House Seat Cambridge



1

Why does combatting food insecurity matter to you?

As someone who grew up in public housing, the issue of combatting food insecurity is one of deep personal importance to me. My parents worked hard to put food on the table for us growing up, and no family should have to struggle in order to have basic necessities like food. When I was a kid, Food For Free was there for my family, which has inspired my dedication to uplifting organizations fighting food insecurity and actively supporting Food Banks in Cambridge from Food for Free to the Cambridge Community Center.

2

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

Food insecurity has remained a top concern for me in my district. With the COVID-19 pandemic, food access worsened as families out of work struggled to afford food and students were no longer able to receive school meals. Food For Free played a key role in delivering food to families during the pandemic and their work remains vital in combatting food insecurity. More work, however, remains to be done. A community center in my district launched a food bank during the pandemic - highlighting a need that has not lessened in the neighborhood it serves.

3

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

The drivers of food insecurity are the same as the structural roots of poverty. People need access to good paying jobs, which means access to education and training. One full time job should be enough to feed one's self and family. These drivers are the results of policy decisions that do not center low-income people in decision making. I am currently chairing the Commission to Study Poverty, where we are charged with investigating recommendations to significantly reduce poverty over the next 10 years, to research the question of what drives poverty and how can we, as a legislature, combat those causes.

4

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

We must continue to reduce poverty by ensuring the wages and benefits people receive are adequate to feed their families. We need to continue to raise the Temporary Aid for Families with Dependent Children and Emergency Assistance for the Elderly, Disabled, and Children benefits. We must also expand access to healthy food by funding the SNAP Healthy Incentives Program. We must continue to pass legislation combating climate change to preserve food production and security for future generations. We must fund organizations like Food for Free and listen to their voices on the Commission to Study Poverty.

5

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

I secured funding for Food for Free in the past two budgets and fought cuts to their Weekend Backpack program. I worked on eviction prevention, guaranteeing the right to shelter, rent stabilizations, and building housing stock. I successfully advocated to improve benefits and credits including Temporary Aid for Families with Dependent Children, Emergency Assistance for the Elderly, Disabled, and Children, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and the Child and Dependent Tax Credit. These policies help stabilize families and I will continue to expand in these areas and use the Poverty Commission's recommendations to develop a comprehensive bill reducing poverty.