

# 2024 Food Insecurity Candidate Questionnaire



**Candidate: Michelle Badger [D]**  
**District: 1st Plymouth House Seat**

**1**

## **Why does combatting food insecurity matter to you?**

Combating food insecurity is crucial, it ensures access to nutritious food which is a fundamental human right that supports health and well-being. By meeting an individual's basic need for food they can fully participate in society and pursue education and employment without the distraction of hunger. Additionally, addressing food insecurity helps combat food waste, redirecting surplus resources to those in need. This reduces waste but also creates more resilient communities; people with stable access to food are better able to contribute to their communities. Tackling food insecurity is vital for building a healthier and more equitable society.

**2**

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

Over the past five years, food insecurity in the district has increased due to COVID-19, which exposed and exacerbated the vulnerabilities of many residents. This strain on households has led to a greater number requiring assistance. Fortunately, initiatives like free school lunches and breakfasts have been implemented by the State, providing essential support for students. Additionally, our schools have seen a rise in food pantries and the expansion of our backpack program to ensure needs are met outside of school hours. Working families are increasingly struggling to make ends meet, which demonstrates the need for resources to support residents.

**3**

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

In my opinion, the primary drivers of food insecurity in the district include a lack of access to well-paying jobs, meaning many residents struggle financially. Seniors and vulnerable individuals often face difficult choices between purchasing medications and other expenses or paying for food. This is compounded by rising food prices due to inflation, while soaring housing, transportation, and childcare costs further strain people's budgets. Many residents are also unaware of available programs that could alleviate some of their burdens. These factors create a challenging environment, making it difficult for individuals and families to secure consistent access to nutritious food.

**4**

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

To address food insecurity in Massachusetts, I support fully continuing to fund "School Meals for All" to ensure that every student has access to nutritious meals. Additionally, it is essential to invest in the infrastructure of local food systems to strengthen community resources and improve food access. Expanding the usage of SNAP benefits will help more families afford healthy food options through HIP. I would also advocate for policies that recognize the importance of access to food as a vital component of overall health, promoting initiatives that integrate food security into public health strategies and community well-being efforts.

**5**

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

To ensure all constituents have access to nourishing food, I will advocate for residents by identifying their needs and securing funding for essential programs. Collaborating with local organizations, I will learn more about the needs of local residents and work to expand access to assistance programs, making them more inclusive. Additionally, I will raise awareness about existing resources, which many residents don't know about. As a Board member of the Plymouth Fragment Society, I've seen firsthand how unaware some individuals are of available local resources. By fostering partnerships and promoting outreach efforts, we can create a more equitable food system.