

2024 Food Insecurity Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Tara Hong [D]

District: 18th Middlesex House Seat
Lowell



1

Why does combatting food insecurity matter to you?

Combatting food insecurity is crucial to me, especially in my district, where many students and low-income families face significant challenges. I've seen firsthand how difficulties in accessing food affect everyone in numerous ways—impacting not only health but also education and overall quality of life. Addressing this issue means supporting our community's well-being and creating a more resilient and equitable environment for all.

2

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

In the past five years, food insecurity in my district has grown due to several factors. Rising costs and economic changes have made it harder for many families to afford food. The COVID-19 pandemic also made things worse by disrupting jobs and food supply chains. Local organizations, like Mill City Grows, Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell, Inc. Coalition For A Better Acre, Merrimack Valley Food Bank and many others have stepped up to help, but the need is still great.

3

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

In my opinion, the primary driver of food insecurity in my district is the rising prices. Our district's diverse community has various needs when it comes to buying food, and the cost of affording these foods is too high. However, with the help of nonprofits, much support has been offered to our community but there is more to be done. As the next state representative, my plan is to build better partnerships and identify and bring in the resources from the state to support our community.

4

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

To address food insecurity in our state, we need to increase funding for SNAP and WIC to ensure all eligible residents are supported. Promoting policies that help local farmers, nonprofits, and food producers through grants and subsidies will boost the availability of fresh, locally-grown food. Strengthening our universal school meals program to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students will ensure no child goes hungry. Lastly, enhancing the network of food banks and emergency food assistance programs will ensure quick and efficient support during crises. These actions will significantly reduce food insecurity in our communities.

5

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

As the next State Representative for the 18th Middlesex District, I will first establish better communication between my office and the people in the district, allowing them to seek help and support at any time on this or other topics. At the same time, I will continue advocating for better support and increased funding for programs like SNAP and WIC at the state level for my constituents. Lastly, I will build stronger partnerships with local nonprofits to support their needs so they can offer more to community members in need.