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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Availability of $41 Million in Support for Food Security Programs

Administration Launches New Grant Program and Releases Opportunity for More Agricultural Vendors to Participate in Healthy Incentives Program

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

6/11/2020

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

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Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

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BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced $41 million to address urgent food insecurity for Massachusetts residents as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding implements the recommendations of the Food Security Task Force, which was convened by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center in response to increased demands for food assistance. The task force is comprised of a broad group of public and private members charged with ensuring food insecurity and food supply needs are addressed during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The Administration today opened applications for the new $36 million Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program to ensure that individuals and families throughout the Commonwealth have access to fresh, local food. The Request for Responses for project proposals is available **here** (/service-details/food-security-infrastructure-grant-program).

The Administration also released a **Notice of Opportunity** (/healthy-incentives-program-hip-notice-of-opportunity-noo) to strategically onboard new agricultural vendors for the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), which will allow the Administration to leverage federal SNAP funding and $5 million in new state funding for the program.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear the urgent needs and food supply chain issues for communities across Massachusetts, which is why our Administration is taking significant steps to strengthen food security in the Commonwealth,"**said Governor Charlie Baker.** "By supporting projects that increase the resilience ofthe Commonwealth's food supply chain, we can ensure that families across the Commonwealth, especially vulnerable populations, have greater access to important nutritional resources."

"It is critical that we strengthen our food security infrastructure to ensure that Massachusetts families continue to have access to fresh, local food," **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** "Building on the recommendations of the Food Security Task Force, this program will lead to crucial investments that will help the farmers, fishermen and food producers that are helping our Commonwealth meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic."

The Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program was **announced on May 17** (/news/baker-polito-administration-invests-56-million-to-combat-food-insecurity-in-massachusetts) as part

of a $56 million investment to combat food insecurity for Massachusetts families and individuals. In addition to expanding access to healthy local food, the program seeks to ensure that farmers, fishermen and other local food producers are better connected to a strong, resilient food system to help mitigate future food supply disruption.

“As we work to support individuals, families, and communities severely impacted by COVID-19, one of the most immediate needs we’ve focused on is food security because every resident of the Commonwealth should be able to access nutritious food,” **said COVID-19 Command Center Director and Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders.** “I commend the work of the Food Security Task Force and its focus on vulnerable communities to rapidly develop practical solutions to food insecurity and bring resources where they are needed, by both infusing funds into the local food system, and maximizing federally funded food assistance programs like SNAP and WIC, that support vulnerable populations.”

“Increasing food security is critical to protecting the health of Massachusetts residents, and this program will support important projects that connect our local food production and distribution system to communities and residents facing food insecurity, alleviating immediate needs and ensuring stronger long-term access to food for all residents,” **said Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Kathleen Theoharides**. “The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of reinforcing our local food supply chain, and this significant investment will strengthen the role our farmers, fishermen, and food distributors play in the Commonwealth’s overall food system.”

Eligible grantees include entities that are part of the Massachusetts local food system including production, processing and distribution, the emergency food distribution network, Buy Local, community and food organizations, school meal programming (including summer meal sponsors), urban farms and community gardens, non-profits, and organizations that provide business planning, technical assistance and information technology services. Applications will be evaluated on a rolling basis through September 15, 2020.

Eligible proposals include, but are not limited to, projects seeking to:

- Increase capacity for food direct delivery;

- Increase capacity of food banks and food pantries;
- Increase capacity of local food distribution partners;
- Offer innovative solutions to enable those receiving SNAP and WIC benefits to receive food more easily;
- Offer innovative solutions for urban farming and;
- Help farms, retailers, fisheries and other food system businesses adapt to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to allow them to provide greater access to local food.

In addition to the Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program, the Administration also announced $5 million in new funding for the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP). To leverage this state funding, a Notice of Opportunity has been released to allow new agricultural vendors to apply to participate as HIP vendors. Eligible vendors include farmers' markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and community-supported agriculture farm share programs. Applicants will be evaluated on their ability to respond to the needs of communities and populations impacted by COVID-19, establish HIP access points in areas with limited existing HIP access points or other food access barriers, distribute food in ways that limit the transmission of the novel coronavirus while reaching vulnerable populations, and a demonstrated capacity and commitment to serve SNAP clients in culturally appropriate ways. Applications can be submitted through Wednesday, July 1, 2020.

"The Healthy Incentives Program is a powerful tool in our work to address food security issues across the state. The program not only increases access to fresh, locally-grown food for SNAP clients but also brings critical economic support to our local farms and communities," **said Department of Transitional Assistance Commissioner Amy Kershaw**. "This additional funding will allow us to extend the reach of this impactful program to communities that have been significantly affected by COVID-19 or face structural barriers to food access."

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, farmers throughout Massachusetts have faced significant supply chain disruptions and are challenged in planning for the growing season in these uncertain times," **said Department of Agricultural Resources Commissioner John Lebeaux**. "The new Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program and the expansion of the

Healthy Incentives Program will help support the Commonwealth's agricultural community while expanding access to healthy, local food to those who need it most."

"Massachusetts fishermen have been hard at work helping the Commonwealth respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 emergency by providing healthy, locally-caught seafood," **said Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Ronald Amidon**. "The Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program offers an opportunity to strengthen our historic fishing community and ensure that our fisheries are able to adapt to the challenges created by this unprecedented pandemic and continue to provide fresh, nutritious seafood to families across the Commonwealth."

The work of the Food Security Task Force builds on Massachusetts' initiatives to increase access to food, including establishing emergency food distribution sites and school meal sites for food distribution, implementing Pandemic EBT to provide food to 500,000 youth who usually receive free or reduced priced lunch, distributing additional SNAP benefits to households, requesting online EBT purchasing approval from the federal government, and streamlining food benefit program administration.

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Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

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Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito and the Baker-Polito Administration are working to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and keep Massachusetts residents safe and healthy.

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Executive Office of Health and Human Services

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The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is the largest secretariat in state government and is comprised of 12 agencies, in addition to 2 soldiers' homes and the MassHealth program. Our efforts are focused on the health, resilience, and independence of the one in four residents of the Commonwealth we serve. Our public health programs touch every community in the Commonwealth.

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Department of Public Health (/orgs/department-of-public-health)

DPH promotes the health and well-being of all residents by ensuring access to high-quality public health and healthcare services, and by focusing on prevention, wellness, and health equity in all people.

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Department of Transitional Assistance

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The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) assists and empowers low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long term economic self-sufficiency. DTA serves one in nine residents of the Commonwealth with direct economic assistance (cash benefits) and food assistance (SNAP benefits), as well as workforce training opportunities.

More (/orgs/department-of-transitional-assistance)

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