

Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program

Action Civics project by
South B Block Social Studies
Collins Middle School
Salem, MA



The infographic features a top image of a person in a blue shirt holding a wooden crate filled with fresh vegetables like lettuce, tomatoes, and carrots. Below this is a dark blue banner with the text 'MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (MEFAP)'. The main title '30 Years of Impact' is in a large, bold, dark blue font. The infographic is divided into three green sections: the top one states '416+ million meals distributed' with a plate and fork icon; the bottom left one states 'Across all 351 MA cities and towns via ~1,100 food providers' with a house icon; and the bottom right one states 'While supporting ~130 MA farms and food manufacturers' with a farm icon.

MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (MEFAP)

30 Years of Impact

416+ million meals distributed

Across all 351 MA cities and towns via ~1,100 food providers

While supporting ~130 MA farms and food manufacturers



Our process

We first started this project in September 2025. We researched many problems that were impacting Salem. Some of these issues were:

- Food insecurity
- Homelessness
- Affordable housing
- Racism
- Lack of public school options

As a class, we voted on the topic that we felt was impacting our community the most. After we researched our options, we narrowed it down to food insecurity and homelessness.

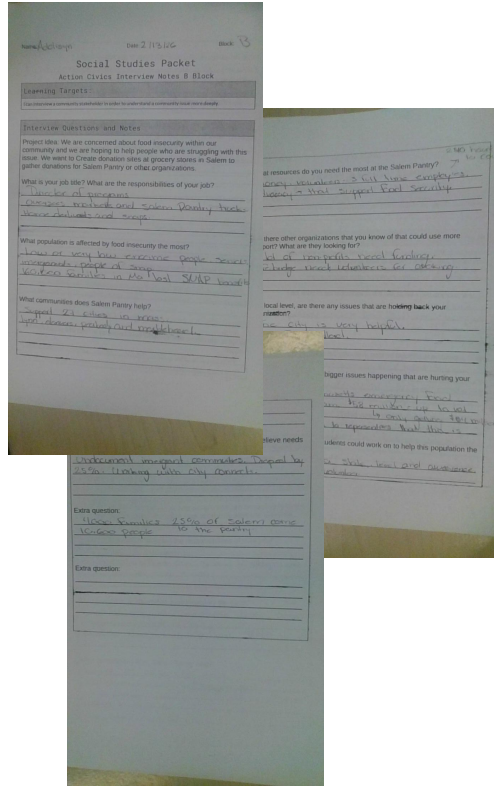


Interviewing a stakeholder

After much discussion and research, we decided on food donation sites at grocery stores, hoping this would make the biggest impact. To narrow down our ideas we decided to interview the director of the Salem Food Pantry, Mike Lilley. During his interview we learned:

- The Pantry supports cities all over the Northshore.
- Many families and individuals use the Salem Pantry, with 25% of Salem residents visiting every year.
- They mainly need money and volunteers to keep it running, while also relying heavily on advocacy.
- Currently as a whole, food banks are receiving less funding than needed.

He mentioned an important bill that would be voted on shortly in the Massachusetts House of Representatives.









What we learned about the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP)

We learned that the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP), is a program that allows food banks all across Massachusetts to continuously purchase food products to provide families with healthy diets at no cost. This program helps feed people in every town of Massachusetts and in 2025 it provided 600,000 meals per month for families. This program makes a difference and significantly impacts our communities.

Here are some factors that negatively impact MEFAP:

- Federal cuts
- Food inflation
- SNAP reduction

Why MEFAP Matters

- In FY23, **51% of MEFAP funds** supported local farmers, fishers, and food producers. 
- 99.1% of MEFAP-purchased food** meets high nutritional standards. 
- MEFAP food accounted for **23% of all food distributed** by MA food banks last year—providing **over 25 million meals!** 
- MEFAP enables the four MA food banks to provide food to every district through over **900 food programs** across the state. 



Federal funding cuts that affect nonprofits and food banks

[USDA cancels 1 billion in funding for schools and food banks to buy food from local supplies](#) - CBS NEWS

“The move cancels about \$660 million in funding this year for the Local Food for Schools program, which is active in 40 U.S. states, as well as about \$420 million for a second program called the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement, which helps food banks and other local groups provide food to their communities.”

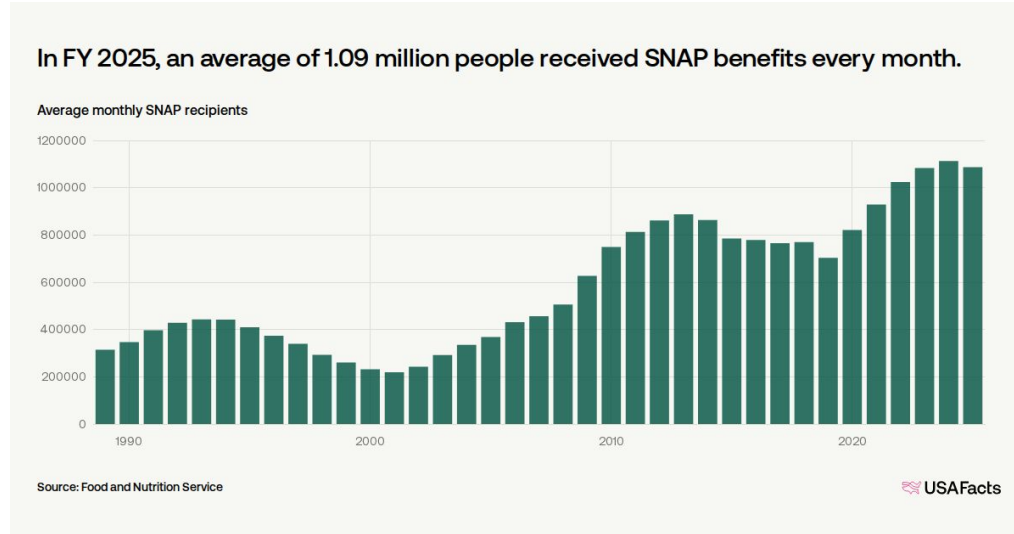
The Federal government is cutting funding that will affect the children in Salem and their families. In Massachusetts we need to make-up this difference.

[How Government Funding Disruptions Affected Nonprofits In Early 2025](#)

The One Big Beautiful Bill reduces SNAP funding around \$186 billion over 10 years—a 20% cut that marks the largest reduction in the history of the program. This means tons of families won't get fed, and children won't be getting the nutrition they need!



Average Annual Number of SNAP Recipients in Massachusetts



This graph shows the increase of recipients in Massachusetts that receive SNAP benefits increasing significantly from 1990 to 2025



Local Food Banks Impacted

Salem Food Pantry

The Salem Food Pantry is an organization located in Salem Massachusetts, that helps provide food to families and individuals, who struggle with food insecurity. Overall the Salem Food Pantry has provided freshly made meals to individuals and is continuously improving lives.

Unique Individuals Served	32,784
Unique Households Served	10,070
Children Served <18	11,911
Seniors Served 65+	2,999

The Greater Boston Food Bank

The Greater Boston Food Bank is an organization started in 1974 to combat hunger throughout Massachusetts.

This issue is getting worse under the economic climate according to an article from GBH; “A report from the Greater Boston Food Bank released Tuesday shows an estimated 40% of Massachusetts households experienced food insecurity in 2025.” This massive increase is a huge problem in our community, showing that now is the time we need to be giving more support to these vital organizations.



What we have done

- We have done research about how MEFAP works and helps people in need of food assistance
- We have spoken to Mike Lilley who is a stakeholder and researched about different food pantries in Salem.
- We contacted every State Representative
- We received emails back from a few of them!
- We created this presentation to be sent to representatives, like you Representative Cruz!



Katherine Jahl <kjah1@salemk12.org>

Request for MEFAP from Collins Middle School 8th Grade Class

Sabadosa, Lindsay - Rep. (HOU) <Lindsay.Sabadosa@mahouse.gov>
To: Katherine Jahl <kjah1@salemk12.org>

Mon, Mar 23, 2026 at 5:18 PM

Dear Students,

Thank you so much for your thoughtful letter and for the work you've put into your Action Civics project. It is truly inspiring to see the care, research, and commitment you have brought to addressing food insecurity in your community and across Massachusetts.

I especially appreciate how you adapted your project as you learned more, shifting from a local solution to advocating for broader, statewide impact. That kind of flexibility and big-picture thinking is exactly what makes effective civic leaders. You've clearly taken the time to understand the root causes of food insecurity, particularly how it affects low-income and immigrant communities, and your collaboration with local partners like the Salem Pantry reflects a strong, community-centered approach.

You are absolutely right that programs like the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program play a critical role, especially as federal support becomes more uncertain. Ensuring that food pantries and families have the resources they need is essential, and your advocacy helps bring much-needed attention to this issue.

Thank you again for reaching out and for using your voices to make a difference. Please know that your work matters, and I encourage you to continue engaging in this process. Our communities are stronger because of it.

Please never ever hesitate to reach out and thank you for your advocacy!

Kindly,

Lindsay



Katherine Jahl <kjah1@salemk12.org>

Request for MEFAP from Collins Middle School 8th Grade Class

Lindsay Sabadosa, she/her/hers
State Representative for the First Hampds
76 Gothic Street
Northampton, MA 01060
District Phone: 413-270-1166
Lindsay.Sabadosa@mahouse.gov

Higgins, Natalie - Rep. (HOU) <Natalie.Higgins@mahouse.gov>
To: Katherine Jahl <kjah1@salemk12.org>

Tue, Mar 24, 2026 at 1:59 PM

Mrs. Jahl's B Block Social Studies Class,

Thank you for your advocacy! You have a tremendous advocate in Salem in Rep. Manny Cruz, and proud to work with him from my Gateway City of Leominster to support MEFAP and other critical food access services. We've been working to bolster the local food system – with a particular attention to connecting local small farms with residents through the Healthy Incentives Program and boosting SNAP families' fresh, local food access. This is a win-win for nutrition and helping our local farms thrive.

Take care,

Natalie

Natalie Higgins
State Representative
4th Worcester District (Leominster)
978-227-5278 (Leominster)
617-722-2020 (Boston)
978-602-3772 (Cell)
Pronouns I use: she, her, hers



Representative Murphy's office follow up.

Driscoll, Joseph (HOU) <Joseph.Driscoll@mahouse.gov>
To: 'kjah1@salemk12.org' <kjah1@salemk12.org>

Hello Mrs. Jahl's B Block Social Studies class,

My name is Joe and I am a staffer for Representative Murphy. Throughout his twenty-five years in the House of Representatives, Representative Murphy has organized a variety of different projects aimed at assisting his constituents that suffer from food insecurity.

This year Representative Murphy sponsored and participated in a soup kitchens challenge called the Soup Bowl, with other legislators to raise awareness and collect as many soup cans as possible for his constituents. Representative Murphy's district of Weymouth collected 9960 while the competing soup kitchen collected 6280 totaling to 16,240 cans of soup. These kinds of initiatives are extremely important to the Representative, and he will continue to assist those who have food insecurity however he can.

We appreciate your outreach and your support for such an important issue that affects so many citizens of our Commonwealth and our country. Your outreach is integral to making well-educated decisions in the House of Representatives. Thank you for your outreach and thank you for all the work you have done to combat the issue of food insecurity.

Joseph Driscoll

Receptionist
Representative James Murphy
Chairman - Joint Committee on Financial Services
State House Room 254
Boston, MA 02133
617-722-2220



What we are asking for!

- We need you to vote for a higher budget for MEFAP.
 - The current budget that we have now is [42.4 million dollars](#).
 - We are trying to raise the budget to [58 million dollars](#).

This will increase funding for food banks to serve families in need.

- We contacted your colleagues. But we also need you to pass this presentation to them so they will vote on this, and make sure hungry families get fed!



Thank you for your time and for
listening to our presentation!





Any Questions?



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