

# HOUSE . . . . . No. 4226

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, December 26, 2023.

The committee on Agriculture to whom were referred the petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 507) of Patricia D. Jehlen, Rebecca L. Rausch, Vanna Howard and Patrick M. O'Connor for legislation to establish a food justice frontline, and the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 828) of Vanna Howard and others relative to establishing a food justice frontline providing compensated work involving food production, distribution, preparation, or delivery for food insecure residents, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 4226) ought to pass.

For the committee,

PAUL A. SCHMID, III.

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 4226**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)**  
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An Act relative to establishing a food justice frontline.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1           SECTION 1. The General Laws, as appearing in the 2020 Official Edition, are hereby  
2 amended by inserting after Chapter 128A the following chapter:

3           Chapter 128B: Food Justice Frontline Program

4           Section 1. As used in this section, the following words shall have the following  
5 meanings, unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

6           “Department”, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources.

7           “Food Security Job”, any financially compensated work involving food production, food  
8 distribution, food preparation, or food delivery for food insecure Massachusetts residents.

9           “Nonprofit Food Security Organization”, a nonprofit corporation or other nonprofit  
10 organization that has programs which (1) provide land to low- and moderate-income individuals  
11 for agricultural production, or (2) has programs which provide Food Security Jobs to low- and

12 moderate-income individuals, including, but not limited to, food production jobs, food  
13 distribution jobs, food preparation jobs, and food delivery jobs.

14 “Overburdened Community” means a Census Block Group in Massachusetts that meets  
15 both of the following criteria:

16 (1) Is at or above the 75th statewide percentile for at least 2 of the following  
17 Environmental Indicators on the most recent available United States Environmental Protection  
18 Agency’s EJSCREEN Assessment: (a) PM 2.5; (b) Ozone; (c) NATA Diesel PM; (d) NATA  
19 Cancer Risk; (e) NATA Respiratory Hazard Index; (f) Traffic Proximity; (g) Lead Paint  
20 Indicator; (h) Superfund Proximity; (i) Risk Management Plan Facilities Proximity; (j)  
21 Hazardous Waste Proximity; and (k) Wastewater Discharge Indicator; and

22 (2) has a median household income, as calculated by the US Census Bureau, that is no  
23 greater than 80% of the statewide median household income, as calculated by the US Census  
24 Bureau.

25 Section 2. (a) The Department shall create the Food Justice Frontline Program.

26 (b) The purpose of the Food Justice Frontline Program is to fund Nonprofit Food Security  
27 Organizations to enable them to create new Food Security Jobs and provide those jobs to  
28 individuals living within Overburdened Communities. The Food Justice Frontline Program is  
29 intended to create jobs as rapidly as possible after the enactment of this Act, in order to  
30 immediately address the widespread food insecurity throughout Massachusetts.

31 (c) The Department shall create an application with which Nonprofit Food Security  
32 Organizations may apply to receive a financial grant, not to exceed \$500,000. This application  
33 shall be known as the Food Justice Frontline Funding Application.

34 (d) No Food Justice Frontline Funding Application shall be considered complete unless  
35 the applicant: (1) Describes, in detail, the program or programs which the Nonprofit Food  
36 Security Organization operates that provide land or Food Security Jobs to low-income  
37 Massachusetts residents; and (2) Describes, in detail, the ways in which the Nonprofit Food  
38 Security Organization would use funding to create jobs for individuals living within  
39 Overburdened Communities.

40 (e) The Department shall establish regulations and guidelines regarding the process and  
41 criteria for approval of a Food Justice Frontline Funding Application. These regulations and  
42 guidelines shall prioritize Nonprofit Food Security Organizations which demonstrate a clear and  
43 credible plan to use the funding to quickly create Food Security Jobs for individuals living within  
44 Overburdened Communities.

45 (f) Nonprofit Food Security Organizations which receive a financial grant under the Food  
46 Justice Frontline Program must use the entirety of the financial grant money on programs which  
47 will create Food Security Jobs for individuals living within Overburdened Communities. These  
48 jobs must pay an hourly wage of not less than the quotient of one divided by two thousand and  
49 four hundred ( $1/2,400$ ), multiplied by the statewide per capita income, as calculated by the  
50 United States Census Bureau.

51 (g) A Nonprofit Food Security Organization may apply for multiple financial grants  
52 under the Food Justice Frontline Program.

53           Section 3. The Department shall have the power to enter contracts, hire employees, hire  
54 contractors, promulgate rules and regulations, levy fines, adjudicate administrative cases, or take  
55 any other lawful action in order to implement the Food Justice Frontline Program.

56           SECTION 2. Chapter 128 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
57 section 2E the following section:

58           Section 2F. (a) The Department of Transitional Assistance, the Executive Office of  
59 Economic Development and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities shall  
60 establish a new program designed to increase public awareness of the availability of the  
61 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Healthy Incentives Program, and other similar  
62 food access programs for low-income Massachusetts residents and food insecure Massachusetts  
63 residents. In order to carry out this program, the Executive Office of Economic Development and  
64 the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities shall work with Massachusetts  
65 residents under the age of eighteen to promote public awareness of the Supplemental Nutrition  
66 Assistance Program. The Executive Office of Economic Development and the Executive Office  
67 of Housing and Livable Communities shall compensate these Massachusetts residents with a  
68 stipend of not less than 15 dollars for every hour in which they work to promote public  
69 awareness of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Department of Transitional  
70 Assistance, the Executive Office of Economic Development and the Executive Office of  
71 Housing and Livable Communities shall prioritize working with Massachusetts residents who  
72 live in Overburdened Communities or Census Block Groups with a median household income  
73 that is below 80% of the statewide median household income. This program shall be conducted  
74 in multiple languages in order to ensure that it benefits both English-speaking families and non-  
75 English speaking families.

76 (b) The Department of Transitional Assistance, the Executive Office of Economic  
77 Development and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities shall apply for any  
78 available federal programs including, but not limited to, the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive  
79 Grants administered by the United States Department of Agriculture to provide matching  
80 benefits to be deposited in the Fund.

81 (c) The Department of Transitional Assistance, the Executive Office of Economic  
82 Development and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities shall promulgate  
83 rules and regulations to implement these programs.