



H.196 S.167: An Act to Maximize Participation in SNAP and Improve Customer Service

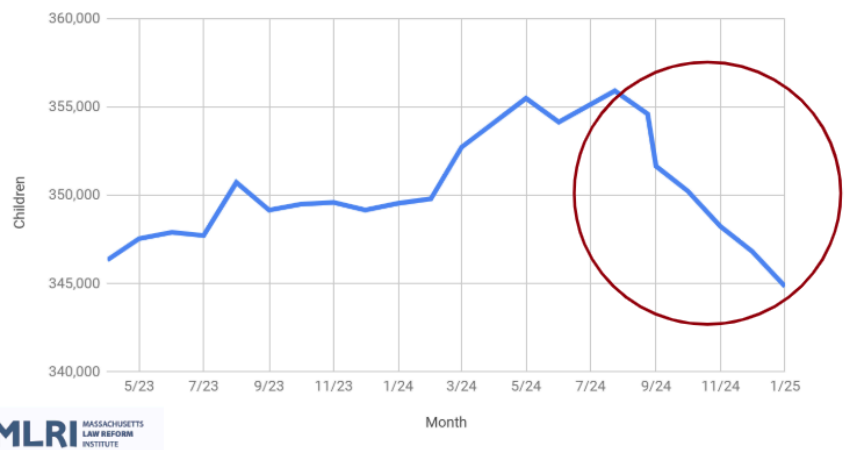
SNAP Data: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) serves nearly 1.1 million **low-income Mass residents** - 1 in 6 people. Most are severely disabled, older adults, or minor children and their caregivers.¹

- SNAP is 100% federally funded. States receive 50% reimbursement for administrative costs.
- MA receives approx. \$250 million each month in SNAP benefits - nearly \$3B per year.
- All SNAP dollars are spent at EBT-approved grocers and farmer markets. SNAP provides an economic stimulus to the local economy of \$1.50 to \$1.70 for each \$1 in SNAP spent.

The Problem: Since the COVID pandemic began, the caseload increased significantly as DTA worked to improve access and close participation gaps. **DTA now lacks enough staff and IT resources** to keep up with timely phone interviews, handling client calls to report changes, and processing client documents.

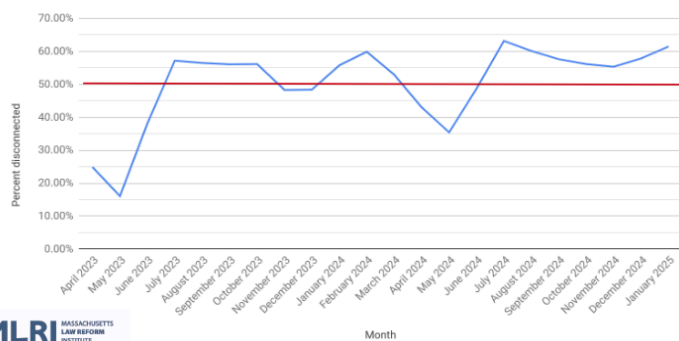
Each month, thousands of low-income MA residents face severe access barriers trying to enroll in or renew SNAP.

Number of Massachusetts children on SNAP: April 2023 - Jan. 2025



Due to access barriers the Massachusetts SNAP caseload has precipitously declined, especially among eligible low-income families with children.

Percent of calls trying to reach a SNAP worker cut-off due to high call volume: April 2023 - January 2025



DTA receives roughly 40,000 applications each month - including 5,000 to 8,500 from households applying for SNAP through their MassHealth applications and renewals.²

Yet each month, **roughly half** of the denied SNAP applications are denied for lack of an interview with a DTA worker or due to paperwork challenges.

¹ DTA Performance Scorecard January 2025. Roughly 1.1 million MA residents get SNAP including 261K older adults, 310K persons with disabilities, 345K children. <https://www.mass.gov/lists/dta-performance-scorecards>

² Language requiring MassHealth to allow persons to apply for SNAP at the same time included in line item 4400-0300 in the FY2021 and FY2020 Budgets. DTA started receiving these applications in August of 2022.

The Growing Need: The rate of food insecurity in Massachusetts is approaching its May 2020 pandemic peak.³ As of September 2024, approximately, 18.4% of all MA households reported food insecurity, with an estimated 21.5% of households with children facing food insecurity.⁴

Meanwhile, food prices⁵ and housing costs⁶ in MA and across the nation continue to rise, while wages and unearned income fail to keep up with inflation.

What This Legislation Does: H.196 and S.167 would require the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to identify and report to the Massachusetts Legislature the staffing and IT resources that DTA needs to improve customer service and maximize federal SNAP participation.

Massachusetts quickly needs to address the growing SNAP access barriers, ensure families can reach DTA when they need a required interview, verbally report a change that could impact their benefits, or get information on their case. Failure to provide sufficient IT funds and fully staff DTA risks losing **both** important federal nutrition dollars for low income households **and** the economic stimulus those benefits bring to grocers, farmers and the Commonwealth.

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March, 2025

³ “Prior to the pandemic, household food insecurity in Massachusetts was at 8.2%. The coronavirus pandemic fueled a hunger crisis unlike any other in our lifetime, at its peak rendering 19.5% of households food insecure.” Project Bread, Get the Facts- Hunger by the Numbers. <https://projectbread.org/hunger-by-the-numbers>

⁴ Project Bread data above and U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey Data, 2024 <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data/datasets.2024.html#list-tab-1264157801>

⁵ USDA Economic Research Service, Food Price Outlook, Feb 25, 2025 <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-price-outlook/summary-findings>

⁶ Federal Reserve Bank of Boston 12/12/24 ‘Nowhere to hide:’ Housing costs keep climbing in all corners of New England <https://www.bostonfed.org/news-and-events/news/2024/12/nowhere-to-hide-housing-costs-keep-climbing-in-all-corners-of-new-england-boston-fed-housing-crisis>