

An Act concerning Food Insecurity and Supporting the Restaurant Industry

House bill number: 207
Senate bill number: 118

Lead Sponsors:
Senator Ed Kennedy
and Representative
Daniel Donohue

The Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) will allow low income Massachusetts residents who are age 60 or older, have a severe disability or are homeless to use their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT benefits to buy nutritious prepared meals at participating restaurants.

Many residents struggle with being able to cook and prepare nutritious meals for themselves, especially if they lack cooking facilities, have mobility challenges and/or difficulty preparing hot food.

The RMP is an innovative federal option that furthers the reach of SNAP benefits, ensuring that the most vulnerable low income individuals can access a hot meal. States like California, Arizona and Michigan have already implemented RMP for their residents, with Rhode Island having a pilot program.¹



WE HAVE TWIN CRISES:



People are going hungry.



Restaurants are going under.

58%

of chain and independent full service operators expect to continue furloughs and layoffs

This Act addresses two problems with one simple change by providing the opportunity to tackle food insecurity and support our restaurant industry. Food insecurity among older adults alone is growing.²

This bill would require the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to seek US Department of Agriculture (USDA) approval to implement the federal option and work with area restaurants to become EBT approved retailers.



Massachusetts has a history and the capacity to take on this program.

The successful implementation of the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), is a prime example of two needs being met:

- 1 Allowing SNAP households to have more resources to purchase locally-grown healthy food and supporting local farmers.
- 2 This RMP bill will help to meet the nutrition needs of our most vulnerable residents while also supporting the struggling restaurant industry.

Expansion of the RMP program has also been supported by the National Restaurant Association and National Chain of Restaurants.³

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Under the RMP option, approved restaurants **must offer a "low cost" meal option if they accept EBT.**



USDA rules limit the RMP option to SNAP recipients who are homeless, persons with disabilities and older adults because they are populations long recognized as facing barriers to cooking.

¹ See: California RMP: cdss.ca.gov/benefits-services/food-nutrition-services/restaurant-meals-program
Michigan RMP: michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71547_5527_104514---,00.html
Arizona RMP: des.az.gov/services/basic-needs/food-assistance/restaurant-meals-program
Rhode Island RMP pilot: dhs.ri.gov/Programs/SNAPFoodAccessProject.php

² NBCNews January 17, 2021 *Hidden hunger: Elderly hunger is on the rise during Covid*
[nbcnews.com/news/us-news/hidden-hunger-elderly-hunger-rise-during-covid-n1254415](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/hidden-hunger-elderly-hunger-rise-during-covid-n1254415)

³ Washington Post, April 28, 2020 [washingtonpost.com/news/voraciously/wp/2020/04/28/democrats-want-to-let-millions-more-americans-use-their-food-stamps-at-restaurants/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/voraciously/wp/2020/04/28/democrats-want-to-let-millions-more-americans-use-their-food-stamps-at-restaurants/)