

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS GABRIELA COLETTA ZAPATA, DURKAN, FERNANDES
ANDERSON, FITZGERALD, FLYNN, PEPÉN, SANTANA, WEBER, WORRELL AND
LOUIJEUNE



**CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL**

ORDINANCE CODIFYING THE OFFICE OF FOOD JUSTICE IN
THE CITY OF BOSTON

- WHEREAS:** According to the most recent Household Food Security Report published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, 13.5 percent of U.S. households struggled with food insecurity at least some time during the year in 2023. The data showed a significant increase from 12.8 percent in 2022, which was an even larger jump from 10.2 percent in 2021; *and*
- WHEREAS:** The report also highlighted that rates of food insecurity in 2023 were higher than the national average among households with children at 17.9 percent; households with a single parent; Black households at 23.3 percent and Hispanic households at 21.9 percent; and households with incomes below the poverty threshold; *and*
- WHEREAS:** The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the existing food insecurity gap, especially for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other communities who already faced health and wealth disparities before the pandemic due to systemic racism; *and*
- WHEREAS:** During the initial surge of the pandemic in 2020, calls for food assistance to Project Bread's Food Source Hotline in Boston increased by 262%, while the Greater Boston Food Bank saw an increase of 2,554% in their distribution of food from 2019 to 2020; *and*
- WHEREAS:** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has found that poor nutrition can lead to serious health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and some cancers; *and*
- WHEREAS:** Access to nutritious food is a critical social determinant of health that has a direct impact on the well-being and lifespans of Boston residents; *and*
- WHEREAS:** The availability of food through supermarkets and convenience stores varies across the City of Boston, especially in neighborhoods like East Boston and Dorchester which have no grocery stores within half a mile, also known as food deserts; *and*
- WHEREAS:** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families, but there is

a significant gap between the amount of people eligible for SNAP and the number of people enrolled in the program; *and*

WHEREAS: On February 24, 2022, the Mayor announced that the Office of Food Access would be renamed the Office of Food Justice, with a commitment to making nutritious, affordable, and culturally relevant food accessible to all Boston residents; *and*

WHEREAS: Providing the Office of Food Justice with clear powers and authority will help streamline city food services and resources, reduce food waste, and improve data collection regarding food insecurity in the City of Boston; *and*

WHEREAS: The City of Boston has made great strides in increasing accessibility to healthy and nutritious food for residents; **NOW THEREFORE**

Be it ordained by the City Council of Boston as follows:

That the City of Boston Code, Ordinances be amended in Chapter VI by adding the following after 6-11:

6-12: The Office of Food Justice

Section 1. Purpose

The purpose of this ordinance is to formally create the Office of Food Justice, which will work to improve accessibility and affordability of healthy food in Boston. Every resident in the City should have access to nutritious food, and that food should be affordable, easy to find, and reflect the many cultures of the City of Boston. The Office of Food Justice shall create food-secure communities with vibrant and inclusive food cultures to reflect the diversity of Boston residents.

Section 2. Appointment of Director

The Mayor shall appoint a Director to oversee the Office of Food Justice. The Director or designee shall administer all food security and nutrition programs.

Section 2. Duties of the Office of Food Justice

The Office of Food Justice shall implement and administer programs and projects related to its purpose, and shall promulgate all rules necessary to effectuate the purposes of this legislation. Such programs shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Double Up Food Bucks
2. Boston Farmers Markets
3. Community Fridges
4. Farmers Market Coupon Program

5. Food Forests
6. Summer Eats
7. Urban Farming in Boston

The Office of Food Justice is authorized to enter into agreements necessary to effectuate programs and projects related to its purpose, and, in connection with agreements entered into under this Ordinance, to enter into and execute all such other instruments and to perform any and all acts, including the allocation and expenditure of duly appropriated funds, as shall be necessary or advisable in connection with the implementation of such agreements and any renewals thereto.

Section 3. Severability

The provisions in this ordinance are severable. If any part or provision of this ordinance, or the application of this ordinance to any person or circumstance, is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this ordinance shall not be affected by such holding and shall continue to have full force and effect.

Section 4. Effective Date

This ordinance shall be in effect upon passage.

Filed in Council: January 29, 2025