



Candidate Forum Questions

October 22, 2024, 6:30-7:30 pm

1. Tell us about yourself and why you are running for the office of State Representative of the 10th District in Bristol County.
2. There are many inequities in our food ecosystem, particularly impacting Black, Indigenous, and people of color; ranging from low wages and poor working conditions in the food system sectors to physical and cultural access to food. Please describe any plans for creating equitable access to the food system, such as individuals needing loans to become aquaculture or agricultural farmers, selling value-added products as part of the cottage industry, or owning a restaurant, but are denied because of structural racism.
3. As of January 2024, 1.1 million people were enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) in MA. As of July 2024, \$2 million in HIP benefits were used, a 20% increase in dollars from July 2023, and the first time the program served more than 50,000 households in a month! How will you support the Healthy Incentives Program?
4. Many children in our schools do not understand where food comes from or the importance of healthy eating. Many of our schools rely on big industrial food companies that make prepared foods and cannot procure local food from our surrounding farmers. How will you support the Massachusetts farm-to-school program and food literacy education programs to help our children make healthy and sustainable food choices and have culturally appropriate food choices?
5. According to our 2021 Southeastern MA Food System Assessment, in a survey of 490 households, the most challenging food to get in food pantries was meats, seafood, fruits, and vegetables. In the summer of 2023, food pantries across the region reported getting less food from their sources yet saw an increase in people coming to their food pantries. How would you support a way to incentivize farmers and food establishments to donate food to food pantries, and reduce food waste?
6. For five years, from 1997 to 2002, the Commonwealth provided state-funded SNAP and TAFDC, to immigrants cut off from federal benefits in the wake of the 1996 Welfare Reform Law. However, times have changed. Currently, 1 in 6 Massachusetts residents, roughly 17%, are foreign-born. Many lawfully present immigrants are barred from the federal SNAP program yet are essential workers that make up the backbone of our economy. One New Bedford immigrant resident of 20 years said, "Taking care of four children as a single parent, I was reliant on the community for help. I got SNAP, which was a blessing and enabled me to raise my children and work professionally in the community." How would you support state-funded SNAP for MA immigrants?
7. Climate change is impacting our ability to produce enough food to feed people. We have fires and droughts in the west and most recently, hurricane Helene devastated the Southeast. New England Feeding New England reported that we should expect a mass migration of people from these climate change-impacted areas to move to New England. All these conditions result in a breakdown in food production and supply chains. How would you combat climate change, so local farming, fishing, and aquaculture industries are supported in building a more resilient food system?
8. Currently, there is no standard set of regulations for Cottage Food Laws in the Commonwealth. When farmers and people who make food in home kitchens to sell at farmers markets, direct order to delivery, or online sales - such as jams, bread, tortillas, fruit empanadas, cookies, churros, coffee beans, pickled vegetables, granola, and other non-



temperature regulated foods - they are treated like a "food establishment" alongside restaurants, catering operations, and food trucks. This means that some municipal Departments of Health require permits, including a fee, and inspections of the kitchens, while others do not. There is no consistency from town to town and, therefore, no equity in the current system. How would you support farmers and families who want to make a living selling food products as part of the cottage industry?

9. According to ReFED, 38% of food is unsold or uneaten. When food scraps are sent to the landfill, it decomposes and produces methane gas, which is 80% more lethal than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas. What strategies would you support to reduce food waste and support composting and food recovery?

Do not forget to vote on Tuesday, November 5. Find out where to go to vote at www.sec.state.ma.us/WhereDoIVoteMA/WhereDoIVote.