

Baker-Polito Administration Launches \$1 Million Initiative Promoting Access to Healthy, Local Nutritional Options

New Food Trust Program Will Address Food Insecurity and Support Massachusetts Agriculture

BOSTON – Today, at the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations' 35th Anniversary Celebration, Governor Charlie Baker announced the launch of the Baker-Polito Administration's new Massachusetts Food Trust Program (MFTP), providing \$1 million in grant funding to establish a financing infrastructure for organizations working to increase access to healthy, affordable food options and to improve economic opportunities for nutritionally underserved communities across the Commonwealth.

“With the launch of the Massachusetts Food Trust Program, our administration strengthens its commitment to addressing food insecurity, supporting agriculture and improving access to locally-grown nutritional options for families,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “By helping to meet the financial needs of fresh food retailers and distributors operating in underserved communities, we can ensure families across the Commonwealth are able to thrive and be healthy.”

“Providing Massachusetts families access to affordable, fresh, healthy food products continues to be a priority for our administration,” **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. “The Massachusetts Food Trust Program will not only help address food access issues, but stimulate local economies and create jobs by helping innovative local food infrastructure initiatives expand and improve their operations.”

The MFTP, funded through the Baker-Polito Administration's Fiscal Year 2018 Capital Investment Plan, will provide funding through grants to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and Community Development Corporations (CDCs). This statewide program is designed to meet the financing needs to fresh food retailers and distributors that plan to operate in underserved communities where costs and credit needs cannot be filled solely by conventional financing institutions.

“The Food Trust Program will help finance organizations that connect Massachusetts farmers and their fresh, healthy products with residents in nutritionally underserved communities across the state,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Mathew Beaton**. “Increasing access to locally grown, caught and harvested food will help expand the market for these products and ensure the continued viability of the Commonwealth's vital agricultural and fishing industries.”

“We are thrilled to see the launch of this important initiative,” **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash**. “Our CDFIs and CDCs are critical partners in our efforts to support Massachusetts communities, and this program will provide a new resource to improve access to healthy food, close the funding gap for many small businesses, and prioritize the Commonwealth's agriculture sector.”

“This new program will leverage private resources in concert with funding from the administration to increase access to healthy food in the communities that need it most,” **said Administration and Finance Secretary Michael J. Heffernan**. “We were pleased to include this program in our capital investment plan as part of the administration’s ongoing work to address food insecurity in underserved communities across the Commonwealth.”

With the funding, grantees may provide grants, loans and technical assistance to support entities that have shown a meaningful commitment to sell fresh, affordable and local health products, with a preference for Massachusetts-grown, caught or harvested food. Projects that are eligible for funding through the awarded financial institutions include the development, renovation and expansion of supermarkets; commercial community kitchens; commercial greenhouses; retail, restaurant and supporting food distribution hub options.

“The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) looks forward to collaborative efforts of successful applicants who demonstrate a meaningful commitment to sell fresh, local products from Massachusetts farmers,” **said MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux**. “The investment in infrastructure for urban and rural-based community-supported agriculture businesses and working capital for equipment will complement MDAR’s successful Food Ventures Program.”

“Expanding access to healthy foods has been a priority of mine and I was proud to support the inclusion of Massachusetts Food Trust funding in the Environmental Bond Bill,” **said State Senator Anne Gobi (D-Spencer), Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture**. “Thank you to Secretary Beaton and the Baker-Polito Administration for the timely release of these funds.”

“The diversity of projects applicable for grants under the Massachusetts Food Trust Program is key in ensuring we reach folks throughout the Commonwealth, especially in our most underserved communities,” **said State Representative William Pignatelli (D-Lenox), House Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture**. Having access to healthy, locally produced foods and goods can make a world of difference and I want to thank the Baker-Polito Administration for committing \$1 million in grants for this program.”

“I would like to thank the Baker Administration and Speaker DeLeo for making this Massachusetts Food Trust program a priority,” **said State Representative Dan Hunt (D-Boston)**. “Food security in nutritionally underserved communities has been a priority for me in my time in the legislature. It’s critically important to have healthy options for low income families and to do so with dignity. Teaching healthy eating to children will be an historic generational shift in the way we, as a Commonwealth, consume nutritious locally sourced food products in the future. I would also like to thank Maddie Ribble, Director of Policy and Communications at the Massachusetts Public Health Association for his passion and leadership on making the Food Trust a reality.”

“Improving access to supermarkets and other stores that sell healthy and affordable foods is a critical component of a comprehensive strategy to reduce rates of childhood obesity and diet-related diseases, and to create local jobs,” **said State Senator Michael O. Moore (D-Millbury), a primary sponsor of this initiative in the Legislature.** “There are too few supermarkets in low-income communities in Massachusetts. In fact, we have the third fewest supermarkets per capita in the Country. I commend the Administration on moving forward with the release of this grant funding to support the Food Trust program, and to ensure the health and economic vitality of our communities.”

“Good nutrition is paramount to the well-being and optimal development of all Massachusetts residents, and the Food Trust Program’s commitment to addressing food insecurity and improving access to affordable and nutritious food options in food desert regions is essential to creating a brighter future for those most in need,” **said State Representative Daniel M. Donahue (D-Worcester).** “Healthy individuals make for healthy communities.”