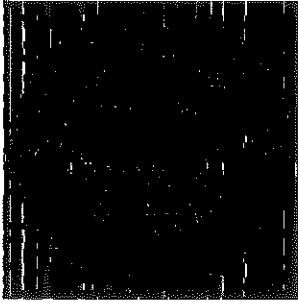


Offered by City Councilors Julia Mejia and Liz Breadon



**CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL**

**ORDER FOR A HEARING ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY
AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN THE MIDST OF THE
COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

- WHEREAS,* Since even before the outbreak of COVID-19, Eastern Massachusetts experienced acutely high rates of food insecurity with nearly one in eleven people living in the area struggling to put food on their table--in part due to a high cost of living and as a result of being at the end of an agricultural supply chain according to the Greater Boston Foodbank; *and*
- WHEREAS,* While roughly 61.2% of people in need of food support are currently in poverty, around 34% of people experiencing hunger in Eastern Massachusetts are working- and middle-class, meaning that they make too much money to qualify for government assistance but make too little money acquire enough food; *and*
- WHEREAS,* These circumstances have been made worse as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, with thousands of people out of work and unable to pay for essentials such as food; *and*
- WHEREAS,* Up until March 13, 2020 when a federal judge issued an injunction, the federal government was ready to cut SNAP benefits, kicking roughly 700,000 people out of the system, making it even more difficult for low-income people to access food during this public health crisis; *and*
- WHEREAS,* Food pantries across the city have stepped up their game in providing food for an unprecedented number of out-of-work and food insecure people, but their capacity is limited due to both the amount of supplies they have and the number of locations in which they can operate; *and*
- WHEREAS,* Some neighborhoods have as few as one food pantry from which residents can obtain their food essentials, meaning that many have to travel relatively far and for a long period of time, heightening the risk of exposure to COVID-19; *and*

WHEREAS, Families with small children not old enough to be left alone may need to travel with their children, which puts added strain and fears into what is already a difficult situation ; *and*

WHEREAS, The food that many communities are able to get a hold of may not meet their dietary, religious, or cultural needs, making it harder for them to utilize the food made available to them; *and*

WHEREAS, Residents have reported not knowing how to cook the ingredients they have been provided, which greatly decreases the nutritional benefits of their food and contributes to food waste; *and*

WHEREAS, This is an opportunity to empower small businesses, such as bodegas and corner stores, through voucher programs in order to not only provide food that is familiar and culturally competent but to also keep small businesses that are crucial to our community alive; *and*

WHEREAS, Times of crisis are an opportunity to affirm our values of *all means all*, and we should take every chance we get to uplift the voices of those being most severely impacted by this public health crisis; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*

ORDERED,

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to examine ways to improve access to food pantries for food-insecure individuals in a way that uplifts and acknowledges the need for cultural competence in the process. Representatives from the City of Boston, particularly the Mayor's Offices of Immigrant Advancement and Food Access respectively, the Greater Boston Food Bank, Mayor's Office of Economic Development, local bodega owners, members of the public, and any other interested parties shall be invited and are encouraged to attend virtually.

Filed in Council: April 2, 2020