



June 25, 2020

The Honorable Robert DeLeo  
Speaker of the House  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02115

The Honorable Karen Spilka  
Senate President  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02115

The Honorable Alice Peisch  
House Chair of the Education Committee  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02115

The Honorable Jason Lewis  
Senate Chair of the Education Committee  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02115

Dear Speaker DeLeo, Senate President Spilka, Chairs Peisch and Lewis, and other honorable members;

As the Legislature begins to look again at bills that were being considered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we, the undersigned Rise and Shine Massachusetts coalition, urge you to pass S.2473 and H.4218, acts regarding breakfast after the bell, as soon as possible. After passing unanimously in both the House and the Senate, it is clear there is tremendous support for this bill. With these bills now in their third reading, we ask that you prioritize its reconciliation and bring it to the floor for a final vote as soon as possible.

The COVID-19 crisis has forced us to recognize many undeniable truths—from racial disparities in our public health system to the fragile economic position of far too many Massachusetts residents. Now more than ever, we must acknowledge the critical role schools play in identifying and alleviating childhood food insecurity. Today, 1 in 5 children in Massachusetts are at risk of food insecurity. That number is unacceptable. However, even prior to the pandemic, that number was 1 in 9, and more than 150,000 children relied on school meals as their primary source of nutrition.

As schools reopen and decide how best to keep students and staff safe, breakfast after the bell will surely be part of the equation, as large groups of children eating in congregate sites like a cafeteria cannot happen safely. Serving breakfast after the bell eliminates the stigma students can feel by being seen as someone who qualifies for free or reduced-price meals. We know that eating breakfast together in the intimate confines of the classroom increases the feeling of community and students form bonds from the casual conversation that happens when people “break bread” together.

Breakfast After the Bell makes good financial sense as well. As a federally reimbursed program, the National School Breakfast Program has the potential to leverage up to \$25 million to Massachusetts school districts. These payments are made directly to school nutrition departments, helping to support jobs, update kitchen equipment, and provide healthier menu options. With our economy so adversely impacted by the pandemic, Massachusetts cannot afford to leave any federal money on the table.



Finally, we know that COVID-19 disproportionately impacts poorer communities and communities of color – communities that experience the greatest gap between what support is needed and the support they receive. Passing Breakfast After the Bell will help us move to a more equitable society and a more equitable public education system, one in which all students get the nutrition they need to succeed. We urge you take action now.

Should you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Catherine Drennan, Director of Communications and Public Affairs, The Greater Boston Food Bank at [cdrennan@gbfb.org](mailto:cdrennan@gbfb.org).

Sincerely,

### **Rise and Shine Massachusetts Coalition**

Arlington Eats  
Barnstable Community Horace Mann Charter Public School  
Berkshire Community Action Council  
Children's HealthWatch  
Children's Law Center of Massachusetts  
City of Medford  
Community Servings  
Crave Food Services  
Democrats for Education Reform  
Food Bank Coalition of Massachusetts  
    Food Bank of Western Massachusetts  
    Merrimack Valley Food Bank  
    The Greater Boston Food Bank  
    Worcester County Food Bank  
FoodCorps  
Food For Free  
Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)  
Greater Boston Legal Services  
Greater Worcester Community Foundation  
Health Care For All  
Health Care Without Harm  
Holyoke Public Schools  
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts  
Let's Talk About Food  
Massachusetts Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids  
Massachusetts Advocates for Children  
Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law & Justice  
Massachusetts Farm to School  
Massachusetts Food System Collaborative  
Mass Law Reform Institute (MLRI)  
Massachusetts Parents United

Massachusetts School Administrators' Association  
Massachusetts School Nurses Association  
Massachusetts Teachers Association  
Mayor's Office of Food Access, City of Boston  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Mill City Grows  
National Association of Social Workers – Massachusetts Chapter  
Poor People's United Fund  
Project Bread  
Revolution Foods  
Rosie's Place  
School Nutrition Association of Massachusetts  
Shape Up Somerville  
Share our Strength  
South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC)  
Springfield Public Schools  
Square One  
Strategies for Children  
Teach Plus  
The Open Door  
Temple Sinai of Sharon  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester  
Western Area Massachusetts Dietetic Association  
Whittier Street Health Center  
Worcester Food Policy Council

(List as of March 2020 and actively growing)