



June 22, 2020

Secretary Mike Kennealy  
Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development  
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
One Ashburton Place, Room 2101  
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Secretary Kennealy,

In order to increase food access to families and individuals in need, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce (the "Boston Chamber") recommends allocating FEMA funds to restaurants in order to feed low-income individuals. Massachusetts has over 250,000 unemployed restaurant and hospitality workers, and the food insecurity that these individuals experience will not be alleviated soon. With the phased re-opening and social distancing requirements, only 30% of restaurant and hospitality workers will be rehired.

The Commonwealth should petition FEMA to allocate \$25 million to restaurants to feed food-insecure individuals, and the match from the state should be \$6.25 million. These FEMA funds would reach 350 Massachusetts restaurants, provide more than 3 million meals to feed food insecure individuals, and allow 800 restaurant workers to gain employment. The Boston Chamber further recommends that the FEMA funds are prioritized for restaurants that are small businesses, with a set-aside amount for minority-owned restaurants and women-owned restaurants.

California and the City of New Orleans have implemented similar initiatives to use FEMA funding to feed the most vulnerable. Both California and New Orleans used FEMA funding to cover 75% of the cost to feed individuals in need, and the State and local government paid 25% of the cost. While California's Great Plates initiative focuses on feeding low-income seniors across the state, the City of New Orleans invested \$18 million with restaurants to feed vulnerable individuals of all age demographics.

If FEMA funds are reallocated to restaurants to feed food insecure individuals, this would allow for immediate impact to the restaurant and hospitality community as well as individuals throughout the Commonwealth who need emergency food now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'James E. Rooney'.

James E. Rooney  
President and CEO

cc: Chairs, The Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development