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## **New program aims to help address food insecurity, while helping local restaurants**

*Initiative will purchase more than 10,000 meals from independent Newton, Brookline and Wellesley restaurants for those in need*

A new program that aims to provide financial support for struggling restaurants and healthy meals to those facing food insecurity will launch next month in Newton, Wellesley and Brookline.

The initiative will deliver more than 10,000 restaurant meals to food pantries, senior programs and other persons in need who have been impacted by COVID-19.

It is funded by a \$175,000 state budget earmark proposed by state Sen. Cynthia Creem who wanted to help both restaurants and residents in her district.

The Newton-Needham Regional Chamber is directing the effort, in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Newton, the Wellesley Health Department and the Brookline Chamber of Commerce.

"Special thanks to the Newton-Needham Regional Chamber for administering this newly-created state program," said Creem. "Knowing that local restaurants will be helping bring high-quality food to those in need is a true win-win for our communities."

Every dollar in the \$175,000 food assistance program will be spent at local independent restaurants, with \$75,000 allocated to Newton; \$60,000 in Brookline; and \$40,000 in Wellesley. The program will run through June.

“This grant could not come at a better time for both our struggling restaurants and the deeply concerning number of individuals and families in our communities who are struggling with access to food, including residents who may be feeling anxious to leave their homes or are under quarantine,” said Newton-Needham Regional Chamber President Greg Reibman.

“We are extremely grateful to Sen. Creem and the Commonwealth for establishing this program and advocating on behalf of the businesses and residents in her district,” Reibman added.

The Newton-Needham Regional Chamber will work directly with restaurants and volunteers in Newton and Wellesley. The Brookline Chamber of Commerce will manage Brookline’s program. Meals will include a protein, be well-balanced and have flavor profiles that appeal broadly to children, adults and seniors.

“This wonderful initiative helps both our restaurants survive the pandemic and those Newton residents struggling to put food on their tables,” said Newton Mayor Ruthanne Fuller.

“We are very grateful for this state grant that is being administered through the Newton-Needham Regional Chamber,” added Wellesley Select Board member Beth Sullivan Woods. “It is a strategically important grant to two key members of the Wellesley community that have been significantly impacted during the pandemic: our independent local restaurants and residents suffering food insecurity. The timing is wonderful, allowing Wellesley to realize the fuller potential of programs initiated by our Health Department in the spring of 2020 with generous grants from the Community Fund for Wellesley COVID 19 Relief Fund.”

Both chambers are now accepting applications from restaurants that would like to participate in the Food Assistance Program.

- In Newton, the Newton-Needham Chamber is partnering with the Rotary Club of Newton, which will use volunteers to coordinate all deliveries. [Newton-based, independent restaurants interested in participating can apply here.](#)
- In Wellesley, the Newton-Needham Chamber is partnering with Health Department community social workers to coordinate with the town’s restaurants and volunteers. [Wellesley-based, independent restaurants can apply here.](#)
- Brookline’s program is operating independently by the Brookline Chamber with the Brookline Food Bank. [Brookline-based, independent restaurants can apply here.](#)