



[Franklin County schools shore up services amid anticipated surge in food pantry demand](#)

By Erin-Lee Hoffman, Staff Writer, The Greenfield Recorder Published: 11-3-2025

In the wake of a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding reduction for November, education leaders are bolstering existing food assistance programs or resource sharing to support Franklin County students and families.

SNAP beneficiaries nationwide did not receive benefits on Nov. 1, as the federal government shutdown continues. Though President Donald Trump announced that, following the orders of two federal judges on Friday, partial SNAP payments will be distributed, a timeline for when recipients will see the money is unclear.

“The Trump administration just admitted what we have known all along — this funding was available this entire time and the president could have been using it to prevent American families from going hungry,” Gov. Maura Healey said in a statement on Monday, referencing the [\\$4.65 billion](#) from a U.S. Department of Agriculture Section 23 account that will be used to support the partial funding. As reported by Politico, \$8 billion per month is needed for SNAP to be fully funded.

“I couldn’t tell you why Donald Trump and USDA Secretary [Brooke] Rollins wanted so badly to withhold help from seniors, kids and veterans just before the holidays — it’s a nasty, rotten thing to do,” U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern said in a statement on Monday. He also expressed gratitude toward Attorney General Andrea Campbell and the people of Massachusetts for leading 26 states in suing the Trump administration and “serving as a check on Trump’s lawless and cruel disregard for the 42 million Americans — many who voted for him — who desperately need to know if they will have enough money to put food on the table.”

To help Massachusetts residents navigate the gap in funding, Healey [authorized a total of \\$8 million](#) for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program for November. This extra funding goes directly to the Greater Boston Food Bank, which distributes funding to food banks and pantries across the state. In September 2025, 12,638 Franklin County residents used SNAP benefits, according to the [Department of Transitional Assistance data](#).

During this time of uncertainty for SNAP funding, local schools are seeing an increase in demand for food pantry services, while also seeing community interest in donating to help.

Union 28

At Erving School Union 28, which serves elementary school students in Erving, New Salem, Wendell, Leverett and Shutesbury, the Community Network for Children Program has been seeing an increase in need at the Children’s Closet in Leverett, where families can access baby supplies such as diapers and children’s clothing, according to Director Gillian Budine.

Given the already high need for resources before the SNAP delay, Budine said there will “most definitely” be a need for food and other supplies.

“Our focus has been on getting families access to Western Massachusetts Food Bank resources and mobile meal sites,” Budine said about the Community Network for Children Program’s priorities. Budine said the Community Network for Children Program works closely with each principal of the four elementary schools, serving students in preschool through sixth grade, as well as Superintendent Shannon White-Cleveland. Collaboration on what will best serve each school is underway.

Gill-Montague and Franklin Tech

Since the SNAP funding change was announced, Great Falls Middle School, Turners Falls High School and Franklin County Technical School have seen increased demand for their food pantry services, but with equal interest in community support.

At Franklin Tech, the new student food pantry that [opened in May](#) had already seen an increase in demand prior to Nov. 1, according to Taryn Canfield, who oversees the pantry. She expects demand will continue to increase as the school raises awareness about the available resource.

“I think, now that the word is out a little bit more, we’re seeing more students access it, and now, with these SNAP cuts hitting, I think that there’ll be an increase in students needing these services,” she said.

The pantry is open to students who attend Franklin Tech, and appointments can be made to pick up food. The pantry is open during school hours for students to take home food. They can also have food during the day if they are hungry. Donations can be made to the food pantry by contacting Canfield at 413-863-9561, ext. 271.

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts has partnered with the school to stock the pantry, and families have stepped up to make sure supplies are available.

“I’ve also seen a lot of families reaching out to want to donate to the pantry,” Canfield said. “It’s been good to add to our stockpile, because we don’t know exactly what to expect, so we want to be ready and able to manage that the best that we can.”

Turners Falls High School Assistant Principal and Helping Hands organizer Adam Graves said a similar trend of donations is happening at the middle and high school.

“It’s great — we can’t do what we do without our community,” Graves said about people reaching out to provide cash donations or organizing food drop-offs.

While requests for the food pantry by students haven’t increased ahead of the SNAP change, Graves said he feels the need will come as the delays take effect.

“In my opinion, is a student really going to care about English, math or science when they’re hungry? Probably not,” Graves said.

Moreover, the economic uncertainty facing families, on top of SNAP funding delays, creates a “ripple effect,” Graves explained, meaning families are making choices between buying food or purchasing winter gear for kids.

“But we try to do what we can,” he said.

Monetary donations can be made via checks made out to Helping Hands and dropped off at the high school at 222 Crocker Ave. Food donations are also being accepted and can be dropped off at the school. Items needed include peanut butter and jelly, canned vegetables, cereal, pasta and sauce, tuna, Pop-Tarts and snack foods, quick macaroni and cheese, and rice, according to a letter by [Helping Hands](#) on the Turners Falls High School page.

West County

To help students attending the six schools of western Franklin County, the Mary Lyon Foundation is stepping up with a new program at the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional school districts, as well as Rowe Elementary School, beginning Nov. 5.

This multi-organization collaboration between the schools, the Hilltown Churches Food Pantry in Ashfield and the Good Neighbors Food Pantry in Charlemont, will provide backpacks filled with food on Wednesdays and Fridays for families of students who sign up. Additionally, the foundation is expanding its existing grocery delivery service to more families who can’t access food banks during normal hours, and food banks have discussed expanding hours for greater support if SNAP continues to see delayed funding.

“Students or families can take home food twice a week,” Hawlemont Regional School Principal Amber Tulloch said about the new program. “It’s free to families, and very, very needed and very well-received.

The backpacks come with about 13 pounds of food inside.

Tulloch said the school has 42 Hawlemont students who qualify federally for free or reduced lunch, and that is how many bags they plan to start distributing. The number of backpacks available will be increased if more families express a need for assistance.

“Any family in need will get food. I’m not going to ask any questions about it. If you tell me you need food, then you will get food,” Tulloch said.

Mary Lyon Foundation CEO Kristen Tillona-Baker said Friday that 448 students have been registered for this new program across the districts.

The program was already being organized before the SNAP funding news, Tillona-Baker said. She said 48% of students in the district come from families living at or below the poverty line, with some still making enough money to not qualify for federal assistance.

A grant application to fund this backpack program was unsuccessful, but with the anticipated need from the SNAP funding loss, “I just said, ‘Well, we’re going to start the program, and we’ll figure out where the funding is coming from and how we’re going to make it work,’” Tillona-Baker said.

Now, Tillona-Baker said the backpack program is well-supported by volunteers who have stepped up and continue to offer assistance, as they have for previous efforts.

“People care about one another, and so everybody’s always looking for ways to help someone in need,” she said. “It was our current volunteers just letting the schools in the community know what we’re doing, and people have been calling saying, ‘We can help. We can deliver food.’”

Monetary donations have also come in to help this backpack effort, and \$6,000 was spent at Green Fields Market to support the program. Tillona-Baker said this should cover two weeks of assistance, but action needs to be taken for sustained support for hungry students and families outside of crisis situations.

“In West County, there is so much isolation, and there’s a lack of access because we don’t have public transportation out here that’s reliable or goes down into the towns where folks would need it,” she said. “So starting this program, I feel like it’s just a Band-Aid, and it’s not enough. It’s something to get started, and I think we have to look at longer-term solutions when we’re not in crisis on how do we get access to the folks that live out here.”

To help western Franklin County students through the Mary Lyon Foundation, monetary donations can be made to the Mary Lyon Foundation Emergency Fund at marylyonfoundation.org or by mail to P.O. Box 184, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370. For the Good Neighbors Food Pantry, mail monetary donations to P.O. Box 284, Charlemont, MA 01339, and for the Hilltown Churches Food Pantry, mail contributions to P.O. Box 161, Ashfield, MA 01330. Food donations can be dropped off at the Hilltown Churches Food Pantry, 429 Main St. in Ashfield, on Wednesdays at 11 a.m.; at the Good Neighbors Food Pantry, 175 Main St. in Charlemont, on Wednesdays at 10 a.m.; or at the Mary Lyon Foundation office located at Mohawk Trail Regional School, 26 Ashfield Road.

Volunteers are also sought, and those interested can reach out by emailing office@marylyonfoundation.org or calling 413-625-2555.

For information on SNAP benefits, people can visit the state websites dedicated to SNAP information at mass.gov/info-details/november-2025-snap-updates and mass.gov/president-trump-has-frozen-snap-benefits.

Staff Writer Madison Schofield contributed reporting.

Source: https://recorder.com/2025/11/03/snap-funding-loss-franklin-county/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=GR%20Morning%20Report&utm_source=64&utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Building%20bright%20futures%3A%20Carpentry%20program%20for%20inmates%20sparks%20talk%20of%20continued%20collaboration&utm_campaign=GR%20Morning%20Report&vgo_ee=i8Py9jiki9dhlHZ0CO0I0DNWYRQmMrHVPncXLcSjde1uBbAcmUeR%3A%2FgQyA%2Bb%2BY%2FULazbo1nTC2pNuJvJfKNcaX