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MEDIA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2006 STATUS REPORT ON HUNGER IN MASSACHUSETTS

Project Bread's *2006 Status Report on Hunger in Massachusetts* finds that hunger has more than doubled in low-income communities and is using that information to call for a Campaign to End Hunger in Massachusetts. Here is a summary of findings and recommendations. If you would like the entire report please go to www.projectbread.org.

The Problem — Hunger is increasing in Massachusetts

1. The prevalence of hunger in the Bay State is well documented:

Despite increase, statewide numbers for Massachusetts present a limited view because high-income communities are averaged with low-income communities:

- The latest survey conducted by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Census Bureau found that from 2002 – 2004:
 - 7.1% of all Massachusetts households (approximately 175,000) were at risk of hunger and 2.7% experienced hunger.
 - ***This is an increase*** from the previous period for this study, 1999 – 2001, which found the following:
 - 6.7% of households statewide were at risk and 2.0 % experienced hunger.

2. An even bleaker picture emerges when Project Bread looked at **high poverty areas**, where hunger is concentrated. Project Bread recently sponsored a study of households in low-income communities and found:

Hunger in high poverty areas in Massachusetts greatly affects the lives of low-income people:

- 35 towns and cities in the Commonwealth experience a much higher prevalence of hunger (see hunger map). The prevalence of hunger in these communities is six times greater than the statewide average.
- 32% of all households surveyed in these areas are unable to afford adequate food
- 18% experience hunger
- 56% of families with annual incomes below \$20,000 were unable to meet their basic nutritional needs
- ***The current prevalence of hunger in these communities is more than twice the level found in low-income communities three years ago.***



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Compare these findings with the 2003 survey of low-income households that found:

- 20% of all households surveyed were unable to afford adequate food
- 8% experienced hunger

3. The Project Bread *Status Report on Hunger in Massachusetts 2006* also finds a significant association between hunger and health. This information is from various sources, including a Project Bread study conducted in collaboration with researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital.

- Among adults reporting health problems, 65% are at-risk for hunger
- Among children with fair or poor health, 59% are from households that cannot afford adequate food.
- Inadequate nutrition results in both health and learning problems, and academic underachievement
- Inadequate nutrition increases the risk of a host of chronic medical conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.

The Solution

4. Project Bread is calling for a statewide Campaign to End Hunger to provide the mechanism for all sectors of public life to become involved in this comprehensive effort. We have learned, through our collaborations with legislators, mayors, school superintendents, academic institutions, business leaders, and health care providers — as well as through the annual Walk for Hunger, which mobilizes 40,000 concerned citizens to do their part — that a broad-based commitment exists to end hunger in the Commonwealth.

Project Bread and its partners have tested the following highly effective interventions.

Here are some of Project Bread's recommendations for decreasing hunger in the Bay State:

- ❑ Making school breakfast a regular part of the school day;
 - Currently school breakfast reaches 101,000 children; we're calling for an expansion of the program to include another 35,000 students. That's a 35% increase in participation that would lead to an additional 6 million breakfast meals served every school year.
- ❑ Serving a healthier breakfast free-of-charge at all schools with a majority of low-income students, piloted in four elementary schools and ready to be brought to scale;
 - This intervention has been developed in partnership with the Harvard School of Public Health and has been successfully piloted in low-income schools in four cities, Lawrence, Orange, Revere, and Southbridge.



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- Involving health care professionals at neighborhood health centers across Massachusetts in hunger screening and providing assistance to patients in obtaining food resources;
 - This intervention was piloted at the MGH Chelsea HealthCare Center and the MGH Revere HealthCare Center. The results were presented at the American Public Health Association meeting in Boston on November 6, 2006.
- Using technology to create a single application for multiple federal nutrition programs;
- Partnering with supermarkets to promote healthy food choices for families using food stamps;
- Building community coalitions in cities and towns with high concentrations of poverty and hunger.

Together, we can systematically improve access to healthy and nutritious food for thousands of hungry people and bring in hundreds of millions of federal dollars to stimulate the economy of low-income communities in Massachusetts.