



## **Legislation Summary:**

### **An Act Establishing Basic Needs Assistance for Massachusetts Immigrant Residents (Feeding Our Neighbors)**

Bill numbers: H135/S76

Chief Sponsors: Representative Antonio Cabral and Senator Sal DiDomenico

#### **What the bill does, why LWVMA supports or opposes it, and the League position relative to this bill.**

This bill would restore basic safety net benefits to Legally Present Residents (LPR) in Massachusetts.

Currently, legally present immigrants do not qualify for benefits. This includes people who are refugees, DACA/Dreamers, TPS status, victims of violence, and Legally Present Residents such as green card holders, spousal visas etc.) who will qualify in the future but have not yet met the five year residency requirement. Although US citizens in mixed status households (usually children) do qualify for assistance, families often do not apply. Reasons include confusing, contradictory requirements that are difficult for both applicants and administrators to untangle. LPRs face a patchwork of varying eligibility requirements. Significantly, many fear of running afoul of the Public Charge Rule which could mean ineligibility for citizenship or visa revocation. LWVUS opposed the Public Charge rule.

Until 1996, LPRs did qualify for Food Stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (predecessor programs to SNAP and TAFDC). Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act stripped benefits away. Massachusetts passed legislation to continue benefits from 1997-2002, when the law sunsetted.

#### **League Positions**

The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies ...meet the economic, business, and employment needs of the United States and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises...to complement these goals...policies to improve...living conditions (Impact on Issues, p. 134)

Meeting Basic Human Needs: Persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate, or for whom jobs are not available have a right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and access to health care (Impact on Issues, p. 135)