

Honoring Our Shared Humanity

Our humanity — your humanity — deserves respect. Regardless of where you're from, how you identify, how you worship or what you believe, how much you earn, you are no more — and certainly no less — human than I am. By virtue of our shared humanity, we have an obligation to meet one another's basic needs.

It sounds straightforward. Yet we — bewilderingly — honor this obligation inconsistently, often only when it is convenient or when emergencies arise.

For 31 years, the Eastern Bank Foundation has done its best to honor our neighbor's humanity, though we cannot — nor can any of us — claim to be doing enough. Over this time, we've sought to resource priorities that communities have named themselves. We have dedicated outsized resources and effort to help accelerate economic mobility in the region by: growing BIPOC and LGBTQ+ small businesses; expanding access to affordable, high-quality early education; accelerating the creation of affordable housing; and creating more direct paths for "untapped talent" to be gainfully employed and build meaningful careers.

In recent weeks, we and many others have been called to act even more urgently as the systems that support our most vulnerable neighbors faltered. In response to the interruption in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, the Eastern Bank Foundation committed a \$1 million grant to the City of Brockton, where 33% of the population depends on SNAP benefits for food security according to the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance. This is also a community where Eastern Bank's longstanding presence has deepened through its recent merger with HarborOne Bank. That investment will put food on our neighbors' tables by supporting local food pantries, community-based agencies and municipal partners while broader systemic fixes are pursued.

We stand alongside government and foundation partners who also stepped up:

- The City of Cambridge and the Cambridge Community Foundation committed \$500,000 to gift-card relief and expanded food access for families affected by the benefit freeze.
- The City of Boston and the Boston Foundation launched the "Meeting the Moment: Sustaining Families" initiative, beginning with a \$1 million grant to the Greater Boston Food Bank and additional grants of \$900,000 to regional food organizations.



Connor's Kindness Project has distributed over 10,000 Kindness Kits to hospitals, shelters and crisis centers across New England, providing a moment of relief, a spark of home and a reminder to a child that they are not alone. Image provided by Eastern Bank Foundation.

- United Way of Massachusetts Bay's emergency fund has provided crucial support to neighborhood organizations, including in places like Chelsea, to ensure families can access the food and basic necessities they need.
- The Cape Cod Foundation is directing over \$100,000 in additional funds to bolster regional efforts that help ensure food remains accessible to those who can least afford it, and the Brookline Community Foundation convened within 72 hours representatives from frontline nonprofits and Town agencies to develop a community-wide response for the 1,500+ Brookline households who rely on SNAP benefits.

These are representative examples only — there are many others — and we are glad the call to meet this particular moment did not go unheeded. But, our boldest acts to address basic needs can't just be emergency interventions. The disruption in SNAP funding was less an emergency than an indicator of the state of the nation which is unacceptable. We don't feed everyone — and we could. We don't house everyone — and we should. We don't see and value everyone — and we must!

The work ahead is not "emergency-management." The task at hand is re-writing the social contract in ways that honor everyone's humanity. However, the next social contract may not arrive through sweeping national legislation as it did when the New Deal was authored or when the GI Bill was passed. We will likely need to pick up the pen ourselves — leveraging our



Members of the Eastern Bank Foundation volunteering in November 2025 to help address food insecurity at La Colaborativa in Chelsea. Image provided by Eastern Bank Foundation.

collective power as citizens, businesses, nonprofits and philanthropists — to create the economy we desire for all of us.

Doing so will not just require that we pursue the right policies. We will have to do more soul-searching than that to answer more existential questions about who we want to be, how we can make the most of our collective diversity, and what we want the civic purpose of both public and private wealth to be.

In 2026, the Eastern Bank Foundation will continue to show up where needed to help our neighbors avoid a crisis when our current systems fail. Beyond that though, we intend to pursue solutions that fix broken pieces of our civic infrastructure, replace pieces that are antiquated, and offer alternatives to programs and systems that haven't worked for the communities that needed them most.

We don't assume that the work required

to transform systems in favor of people who are too often left behind can be done under our own efforts, by any one organization or any one sector for that matter. We do know, though, that we have to act. We invite you — businesses, nonprofits, government, philanthropists and neighbors — to join us in this work. Not only this holiday season, but well beyond. Because this isn't just about charity or benevolence. It's about the dignity of every human being. And it's about the future we choose to build for our region, together. I hope you'll reach out to me to get involved.

Turahn Dorsey is the President & CEO of the Eastern Bank Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Eastern Bank. Through philanthropy, employee volunteerism, advocacy and collaboration, the Eastern Bank Foundation responds to community needs and supports sustainable solutions to our communities' most vexing challenges.