On February 17th, Senator Julian Cyr and Representative Denise Garlick reintroduced An Act Relative to Establishing and Implementing a Food and Health Pilot Program. This legislation would require the Massachusetts Office of Medicaid (MassHealth) to establish a Food and Health Pilot Program that equips health care systems to connect MassHealth enrollees with diet-related health conditions to one of three appropriate nutrition services, with the expectation that health outcomes will improve and cost of care will decrease.

Prior to COVID-19, chronic conditions were associated with:
- 56% of all deaths and
- 53% of all health care costs in Massachusetts

COVID-19 has exacerbated risk for these conditions, through:
- Skyrocketing food insecurity
- High unemployment
- Delayed medical care

RATES OF DIET-RELATED CHRONIC DISEASE ARE EXPECTED TO WORSEN IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

FOOD IS MEDICINE INTERVENTIONS CAN Respond TO THESE TRENDS, IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES, AND CONTROL HEALTH CARE COSTS

MEDICALLY TAILORED MEAL PROGRAMS:
- 16% net reduction in health care costs
- 70% reduction in ED visits
- 50% fewer inpatient admissions

MEDICALLY TAILORED FOOD PACKAGES:
- Increase fruit and vegetable intake
- Improve medication adherence
- Improve HbA1c levels

NUTRITIOUS FOOD REFERRALS:
- Improve fruit and vegetable intake
- Improve HbA1c levels
- Improve BMI

Emerging research demonstrates that connecting people with complex health conditions to medically tailored nutrition services may be an effective and low-cost strategy to improve health outcomes, decrease utilization of expensive health care services, and enhance quality of life.

For more information on the Food and Health Pilot Program please contact:

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WHAT COULD BE EVALUATED?

1. Total Health Care Costs
2. Emergency Department Utilization
3. Hospital Admissions/Readmissions
4. Pharmacy Costs
5. Clinical & non-clinical Outcomes

WHAT CONDITIONS COULD BE ADDRESSED?

- Congestive Heart Failure
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Chronic Pulmonary Disease
- Renal Disease
- Pre-diabetes
- Hypertension
- Obesity
- Overweight

LEGISLATION CREATES A FOOD AND HEALTH PILOT RESEARCH COMMISSION TO ASSIST IN DESIGN AND EVALUATION

GOALS OF THE PILOT

1. Evaluate the impact of offering a suite of nutrition services on health care utilization and costs
2. Expand access to Food is Medicine interventions across Massachusetts
3. Enhance the ability of our health care system to provide appropriate nutrition services based on patient need

FOOD IS MEDICINE PYRAMID

1. MEDICALLY TAILORED MEAL PROGRAMS

Medically Tailored Meals are meals tailored to personal medical conditions by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist or other qualified nutrition professional. Individuals are referred by a health care provider or plan.

2. MEDICALLY TAILORED FOOD PACKAGES

Medically Tailored Food Packages include a selection of partially prepared or non-prepared food items selected by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist or other qualified nutrition professional as part of treatment for an individual with a defined medical diagnosis. The recipient of medically tailored food is typically capable of shopping for and picking up the food and preparing it at home, and is referred by a health care provider or plan.

3. NUTRITIOUS FOOD REFERRALS

Nutritious Food Referrals are vouchers for free or discounted nutrient dense food. Individuals must receive referrals from health care providers or plans after being identified as having or being at risk for diet-related diseases.

2. The medically tailored meal provider in this study was Boston-based Community Servings. Seth A. Berkowitz et al, Association Between Receipt of a Medically Tailored Meal Program and Health Care Use, JAMA INTERNAL MEDICINE, (2019).
3. The medically tailored meal provider in this study was Boston-based Community Servings. Seth A. Berkowitz et al, Meal Delivery Programs Reduce the Use of Costly Health Care in Dually Eligible Medicare and Medicaid Beneficiaries, HEALTH AFFAIRS, (2018).