

ABLE-BODIED ADULTS WITHOUT DEPENDENTS (ABAWD) WAIVER REQUEST

- 1. Type of request:** Initial
- 2. Statutory citation:** Section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended
- 3. Regulatory citation:** 7 CFR 273.24
- 4. State:** Massachusetts
- 5. Region:** NERO
- 6. Regulatory requirements:** Section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, provides that no able-bodied adult without dependents (ABAWD) shall be eligible to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as a member of any household if the individual received program benefits for more than 3 months during any 3-year period in which the individual was subject to but did not comply with the ABAWD work requirement. Section 6(o) also provides that, upon the request of the State agency, the Secretary may waive the applicability of the 3-month ABAWD time limit for any group of individuals in the State if the Secretary makes a determination that the area in which the individuals reside has an unemployment rate of over 10 percent or does not have a sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for the individuals.

7. Description of alternative procedures:

The State of Massachusetts is requesting to exempt able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) in three counties and 117 cities and towns from SNAP time limits at 7 CFR 273.24.

8. Justification for request:

Under SNAP regulations at 7 CFR 273.24(f)(2), areas may qualify for an ABAWD time limit waiver if they have insufficient jobs. To support this claim, states may submit evidence that an area is designated as a Labor Surplus Area (LSA) by the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, or that an area has an average unemployment rate for a 24-month time period that is at least 20 percent above the national average for the same 24-month period. 7 CFR 273.24(f)(6) provides that States may define areas to be waived.

The State of Massachusetts seeks a waiver for 3 individually eligible counties based on their average unemployment rates that are at least 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2022 through January 2024. The national average unemployment rate for this 24-month period was 3.6 percent; 20 percent above this was 4.3 percent.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data February 2022 through January 2024			
County	Unemployed Total	Labor Force Total	Unemployment Rate
Barnstable County	116,725	2,688,426	4.3%
Dukes County	10,809	233,658	4.6%
Nantucket County	11,424	193,021	5.9%
20% Above National Average Threshold	4.3%		

The State seeks a waiver for one eligible town based on their average unemployment rates that are 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2022 through January 2024. The average unemployment rate for this region was 4.3 percent.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data February 2022 through January 2024			
Towns	Unemployed Total	Labor Force Total	Unemployment Rate
Athol town	6,038	140,413	4.3%
20% Above National Average Threshold	4.3%		

The State also seeks a waiver for an eligible region of 77 contiguous towns and cities based on its average unemployment rate that is 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2022 through January 2024. The average unemployment rate for this region was 4.3 percent. The eligible region is comprised of all towns in Berkshire and Hampden counties, in addition to another 22 towns.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data February 2022 through January 2024		
Contiguous towns and cities	Unemployed Total	Labor Force Total
Adams town	4,398	95,235
Agawam town	12,890	380,764
Alford town	123	5,714
Ashfield town	483	27,215
Becket town	961	21,271
Bernardston town	1,046	29,016
Blandford town	556	18,127
Brimfield town	1,719	53,223

Buckland town	588	23,083
Charlemont town	682	15,725
Cheshire town	1,857	43,973
Chester town	731	17,834
Chesterfield town	490	18,186
Chicopee city	28,632	652,008
Clarksburg town	737	20,393
Colrain town	730	23,824
Conway town	622	28,714
Cummington town	451	11,218
Dalton town	2,921	79,576
East Longmeadow town	6,202	209,830
Egremont town	345	17,173
Florida town	272	9,564
Goshen town	292	15,613
Granville town	760	21,476
Great Barrington town	3,024	89,536
Hampden town	2,336	71,836
Hancock town	245	9,243
Hawley town	153	5,200
Heath town	223	8,717
Hinsdale town	1,218	23,962
Holland town	1,257	38,275
Holyoke city	20,067	385,542
Huntington town	1,121	28,397
Lanesborough town	1,542	39,870
Lee town	2,555	75,349
Lenox town	1,755	43,459
Leyden town	210	11,520
Longmeadow town	5,180	193,903
Ludlow town	11,333	258,519
Middlefield town	194	8,081
Monroe town	24	1,746
Monson town	4,365	117,231
Monterey town	327	10,373
Montgomery town	391	12,373
Mount Washington town	36	1,990
New Ashford town	85	3,146
New Marlborough town	525	19,331
North Adams city	6,601	139,276

Otis town	740	18,381
Palmer Town city	6,802	149,292
Peru town	403	11,594
Pittsfield city	19,522	482,567
Plainfield town	289	8,935
Richmond town	485	17,466
Rowe town	179	3,934
Russell town	844	24,357
Sandisfield town	351	11,140
Savoy town	336	8,924
Sheffield town	1,329	44,092
Shelburne town	773	27,933
Southampton town	2,529	91,559
Southwick town	4,756	133,709
Springfield city	90,211	1,502,728
Stockbridge town	758	22,188
Tolland town	147	7,001
Tyringham town	114	3,653
Wales town	1,008	23,557
Washington town	232	7,396
West Springfield town	13,150	349,566
West Stockbridge town	582	18,399
Westfield city	18,539	502,595
Westhampton town	645	25,098
Wilbraham town	5,862	185,332
Williamsburg town	1,260	34,698
Williamstown town	2,529	77,686
Windsor town	419	11,610
Worthington town	518	16,532
Combined Area Total	308,567	7,257,552
Combined Area Unemployment Rate	4.3%	
20% Above National Average Threshold	4.3%	

The State seeks a waiver for an eligible region of 3 contiguous cities and towns based on its average unemployment rate that is 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2022 through January 2024. The average unemployment rate for this region was 4.3 percent.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data February 2022 through January 2024		
Contiguous towns and cities	Unemployed Total	Labor Force Total
Dudley town	5,934	154,235
Southbridge town	9,514	193,278
Webster town	9,234	208,034
Combined Area Total	24,682	555,547
Combined Area Unemployment Rate	4.4%	
20% Above National Average Threshold	4.3%	

The State seeks a waiver for an eligible region of 5 contiguous cities and towns based on its average unemployment rate that is at least 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2022 through January 2024. The average unemployment rate for this region was 4.3 percent.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data February 2022 through January 2024		
Contiguous towns and cities	Unemployed Total	Labor Force Total
Ashburnham town	2,636	88,429
Ashby town	1,472	46,031
Fitchburg city	23,364	467,249
Gardner city	9,859	232,983
Leominster city	21,081	534,698
Combined Area Total	58,412	1,369,390
Combined Area Unemployment Rate	4.3%	
20% Above National Average Threshold	4.3%	

The State seeks a waiver for an eligible region of 5 contiguous cities and towns based on its average unemployment rate that is 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2022 through January 2024. The average unemployment rate for this region was 4.3 percent.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data February 2022 through January 2024		
Contiguous towns and cities	Unemployed Total	Labor Force Total
Andover town	13,303	459,376
Haverhill city	31,509	845,393
Lawrence city	53,764	857,908
Methuen town	26,610	661,714
North Andover town	12,419	400,678
Combined Area Total	137,605	3,225,069
Combined Area Unemployment Rate	4.3%	
20% Above National Average Threshold	4.3%	

The State also seeks a waiver for an eligible region of 26 contiguous towns and cities based on its average unemployment rate for the 24-month period of February 2022 through January 2024. The average unemployment rate for this region was 20 percent above the national average unemployment rate of 4.3 percent for the same period. The eligible region is comprised of all towns in Bristol County, and an additional six towns.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data February 2022 through January 2024		
Contiguous towns and cities	Unemployed Total	Labor Force Total
Acushnet town	6,335	150,178
Attleboro city	22,175	612,301
Berkley town	3,181	90,280
Bridgewater town	13,299	362,443
Brockton city	54,648	1,150,376
Dartmouth town	17,240	440,892
Dighton town	3,632	102,593
Easton town	11,328	348,050
Fairhaven town	9,222	227,783
Fall River city	55,285	973,560
Freetown town	4,746	129,527
Mansfield town	9,945	343,181
Marion town	2,240	64,727
Mattapoisett town	2,801	78,514
Middleborough town	12,168	327,245

New Bedford city	63,324	1,125,235
North Attleborough town	12,948	400,703
Norton town	8,957	258,051
Raynham town	6,743	183,723
Rehoboth town	5,726	176,150
Seekonk town	7,101	214,218
Somerset town	8,735	223,760
Swansea town	8,164	240,002
Taunton city	31,456	724,639
West Bridgewater town	3,307	95,163
Westport town	8,697	206,504
Combined Area Total	393,403	9,249,798
Combined Area Unemployment Rate	4.3%	
20% Above National Average Threshold	4.3%	

9. Anticipated impact on households and State agency operations:

This waiver will provide consistency for households and State agency operations in areas where unemployment remains higher than the national average.

10. Caseload information, including percent, characteristics, and quality control error rate for affection portion (if applicable):

The caseload for these areas, as of **April 2025**, represents **4%** of the caseload for the state. There are no quality control procedures involved.

11. Anticipated implementation date and time period for which waiver is needed:

The State is requesting a one-year waiver from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.

12. Proposed quality control review procedures:

There are no special quality control procedures needed in conjunction with this waiver.

13. Name, title, email, and signature of requesting official:

Name: Shelly Yarnie

Title: Associate Commissioner for Food Security and Nutrition Programs

Email: Shelly.Yarnie2@mass.gov

Signature:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Frances Ransom', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

14. Date of request: May 6, 2025

15. State agency staff contact:

Name: Frances Ransom

Title: Assistant Director for SNAP Compliance

Email: frances.ransom-canning@mass.gov

16. Regional Office contact person (*to be completed by FNS regional office*):