



City of Westfield
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



59 Court Street, Suite 200
Westfield, MA 01085
413-572-6201

Michael A. McCabe, Mayor

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Contact: Michael A. McCabe
(413) 572-6201

**WESTFIELD COMMITS ARPA FUNDS TO SUPPORT
FOOD INSECURITY & HEATING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

ARPA Program Aims to Assist Westfield households with \$500,000 ARPA Commitment

WESTFIELD- Mayor Michael A. McCabe announced this morning that he has allocated \$500,000 in federal assistance to assist moderate-income Westfield residents to afford basic grocery and home heating needs. The funding, provided by the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), allows communities certain flexibility in choosing how they will be spent. These two programs are eligible as they “respond to the public health and negative economic impacts of the pandemic.”

“All of us have faced the astronomical increase in grocery bills and heating bills over the past few months,” Mayor Michael McCabe said. “The primary legislative intent of ARPA is to ensure that the most basic needs of both local government and the residents we represent are provided with adequate resources to withstand increased costs brought on by economic uncertainty and the pandemic,” he continued. “These two programs have been pursued because they have a direct impact on populations who are least able to absorb inflation in these most basic human needs,” he concluded.

The Greater Westfield Food Pantry has contracted with the City for \$200,000 to assist in the provision of food security programs for Westfield residents, payable over the next four years. The Food Pantry provides groceries to approximately 1,200 people per month, with 51% of those clients being children and 14% being elderly. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in the utilization of food pantries and SNAP benefits throughout the country.

From 2019 to 2020, there was a 42% increase in food insecurity in Hampden County. There was also a 17% increase in Westfield's number of SNAP clients. The Westfield Food Pantry is 90% supported by community donations, and they have been able to support not only continued clients, but also new clients who never thought they would experience food insecurity throughout the pandemic.

Additionally, the City has contracted the Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. for \$300,000 to provide additional households the opportunity to access home heating assistance programs. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), funded by the state and federal governments, provides up to \$1319 per household to assist with heating costs incurred from November through April. The Westfield ARPA program will allow for families whose income falls between 61% and 100% of the Area Median Income (AMI) to qualify for assistance. Without Westfield's supplemental program, the income limit for qualification is 60% of AMI or below.

"We are really excited about this additional project and have already reached out to a few Westfield households that would qualify for this funding," Jessica King, Director of Homeless and Supportive Services said. "Residents were very happy to hear that the city was not only helping their residents with rental and mortgage assistance but has taken it a step further to support the strain Westfield residents are battling with their utility bills as well," she added.

"We are incredibly fortunate to have these one-time resources available to assist in these times of historic challenge," McCabe added. "Each year, our CDBG program invests \$250,000 or more into programs and services that benefit our low-and moderate income populations, but this infusion of ARPA funds has allowed us to more effectively reach a greater proportion of the population," he finished.

The Westfield Food Pantry is located at 101 Meadow Street. For additional information on receiving food assistance, please call (413) 572-0802 or visit their website at www.westfieldfoodpantry.org.

For questions related to the Westfield Fuel Assistance Program, residents should call the Valley Opportunity Council Welcome Center at (413) 534-2466 or email Jessica at jking@valleyopp.com.

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