Monday, July 15, 2019

Joint Committee on Revenue
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Rooms 109E & 34
Boston MA 02133

RE:
- H2390 An Act relative to non-contiguous farm land
- S1793 An Act relative to the preservation of agricultural lands
- H2631 An Act relative to expanding agricultural land
- S1613 An Act supporting farming on non-contiguous land

Dear Chairs Hinds and Cusack, and members of the Committee:

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative is pleased to offer this written testimony in support of modifying Chapter 61A in order to accommodate changes in our local food system currently in place and expanding at a regular pace.

These bills support small parcel farming, an important element of our food system, and in doing so support economic development, public health, and the environment. Smaller parcels in agriculture provide underserved populations with access to land and to healthy food. They also help beginning farmers with less capital enter the field of agriculture, and they house innovative, highly productive, and sustainable hydroponic fruit and vegetable systems. And they allow for increased urban farming, which helps revitalize communities and creates educational opportunities. These forms of agriculture enhance farmers’ ability to generate economic development and jobs, and create a more secure and stable supply of fresh, healthy food in the face of climate change.

The Collaborative is a network of Massachusetts food system organizations working to promote, monitor, and facilitate implementation of the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan as adopted by the Massachusetts Food Policy Council. The Plan represents the views of Massachusetts residents, farmers, hundreds of organizations and businesses, and many government agencies, and offers recommendations toward a sustainable and equitable food system. The Plan’s specific recommendation regarding this issue is:

**Recommendation 3.11**: Reduce Chapter 61A minimum requirement to encourage farming on smaller parcels in all communities – urban, suburban, and rural.
While each of these bills partially meet the Plan’s recommendation, H2390 and S1793 include provisions that serve the needs of farmers and communities better. Farmers, especially beginning farmers on smaller parcels and who must be supported if we are to maintain farming into the future, regularly travel more than 10 miles and across multiple municipalities to farm. Therefore, we ask that these provisions be included in the final bill reported out by the committee.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

Winton Pitcoff
Director