Monday, July 15, 2019

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

RE:
  • H2451 An Act relative to chapter land applications
  • S1760 An Act relative to application deadlines for agricultural, horticultural, or recreational land.

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

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative is pleased to offer this testimony in support of modifying Chapter 61A filing deadlines in order to accommodate the expansion of the farming season. The growth in agriculture in Massachusetts, due to greater demand for local food from Massachusetts residents, greater use of technology, and climate change, has resulted in a shift in the growing season and in the times when farmers have less commitments to their crops and can attend to paperwork. These bills would set deadlines that would allow farmers to focus on operating their farms when needed.

While each of these bills serve farmers’ needs, foresters may not be well served by changes in their deadlines from the current time of October 1. It is reasonable for the Chapters 60 & 61B to have differing deadlines from Ch. 61A if those deadlines are based in programmatic and/or agronomic needs of both farmers and foresters.

The clause in S1760 that disallows withdrawal of an application after submission does not serve farmers well. Because the next growing season’s plans for farmers are typically not fully formulated until late in the winter, the option to withdraw and/or modify an application up until the due date, regardless of submission date, is important to farmers and their ability to continue farming in the best possible manner while also complying with Chapter 61A filing requirements. Therefore, we ask that the ability to withdraw and or modify an application until the due date be preserved in the final bill reported out by the Committee.

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

Sincerely,

Winton Pitcoff
Director