Monday, July 15, 2019

Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Rooms 215 & 42
Boston MA 02133

RE: H.309 An Act relative to updating the plumbing code in order to accommodate agricultural uses.

Dear Chairs Feeney and Chan, and Members of the Committee:

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative is pleased to offer this written testimony in response to H.309, An Act relative to updating the plumbing code in order to accommodate agricultural uses.

Engineers and public health experts have expressed concern that the current plumbing code does not properly address agricultural operations and processing, particularly in regard to dairy operations, and that as a result the code does not ensure health and safety as well as it could. At the same time, it often places an undue economic burden on farmers who are increasingly seeking opportunities to develop on-farm value-added processing operations in order to increase sustainability, which often necessitate plumbing infrastructure improvements.

While this bill does not require changes to the plumbing code, it provides the opportunity for experts, including the Board of Examiners of Plumbers and Gas Fitters, to work collaboratively to enhance public health and safety, better serve the public interest regarding economic and community development, and create a more stable and enriched local food supply.

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 thousands of residents and farms, as well as hundreds of organizations, businesses and government agencies. It emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to food system policy, where issues of economic development, natural resources, equitable access to resources, and others are all taken into account when considering laws and regulations related to food. This bill meets these general objectives as well as a specific recommendation in the Plan:
**Action 2.2.4:** Bring together farmers, plumbers, and regulators to develop a suitable agricultural plumbing code.

We appreciate the Committee taking up this issue and considering it in the context of Massachusetts’ food system as a whole. The Plan, which provides that context, is available at [http://mafoodsystem.org/plan/](http://mafoodsystem.org/plan/). The Collaborative is available to provide additional information and connections to practitioners and advocates who can offer further details, at the pleasure of the Committee.

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

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Winton Pitcoff
Director