

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

House of Representatives

State House, Boston 02133-1054

March 5, 2019

Chair Aaron Michlewitz
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Michlewitz:

We write to respectfully urge the House Committee on Ways and Means to include \$8.5 million in funding for the Healthy Incentives Program in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget.

Since its inception in April 2017, the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) has provided vulnerable families and individuals across the Commonwealth with vital access to otherwise unaffordable fresh, healthy and local fruits and vegetables and spurred significant increases in sales for local farms across Massachusetts. To date, HIP has yielded \$8.3 million in sales of fresh fruits and vegetables for over 200 farms in Massachusetts, providing 54,000 families in our Commonwealth with HIP incentives.

HIP demonstrates the exceptional results that occur when state agencies work together toward a common goal that connects their missions. The Department of Transitional Assistance, in their role as lead agency for HIP, is providing more and healthier foods for SNAP households. The Department of Agricultural Resources has helped farmers sustain their operations through increased sales. And the Department of Public Health has helped vulnerable communities move toward better health outcomes by healthier eating. Thanks to this collaborative effort, HIP is far exceeding expectations, demonstrating the need for continuation of this program, which both families and farmers have already come to depend on.

HIP is not without challenges – most notably deficient funding levels which have necessitated multiple month suspensions in FY18 and FY19 and closed the program to many farmers, families and individuals who want to participate. The ability to ensure consistent, uninterrupted operation of the program is essential to the success of HIP, as suspensions have limited farmers' ability to plan and sustain meaningful business as well as the program's ability to maximize effectiveness in changing consumers eating habits, and left vulnerable program clients without a precious resource.

Given the strong public health benefit and increased economic opportunity for local farmers, we respectfully request HIP be funded at \$8.5 million in FY20 to allow for year-round operation of the program. The provision of \$8.5 million would also support moderate continued growth, as the program is estimating 15% growth in participation. Lastly, this funding allocation would result in accommodation of additional points of sale. For the first time since late 2017, this funding would provide DTA with the means to open up HIP vendor participation to a few new farms in geographic locations currently underserved by HIP.

HIP has been the source of better health outcomes and increased food security for vulnerable families and a champion of our local farmers and economy. The value of HIP is evident and has resonated across every part of the Commonwealth. To that end, we urge the House Committee on Ways and Means to build upon the success of this program and respectfully request \$8.5 million in FY20 funding for the Healthy Incentives Program.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



HANNAH KANE
State Representative
11th Worcester District



DANIEL DONAHUE
State Representative
16th Worcester District



PAUL SCHMID
State Representative
8th Bristol District



PAUL MARK
State Representative
2nd Bristol District



KIMBERLY FERGUSON
State Representative
1st Worcester District



AARON VEGA
State Representative
5th Hampden District



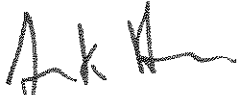
DAVID LINSKY
State Representative
5th Middlesex District



DAVID MURADIAN
State Representative
9th Worcester District



DANIELLE GREGOIRE
State Representative
4th Middlesex District



JAMES HAWKINS
State Representative
2nd Bristol District



MATHEW MURATORE
State Representative
1st Plymouth District



KAY KHAN
State Representative
11th Middlesex District



NORMAN ORRALL
State Representative
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3rd Worcester District

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State Representative
4th Bristol District



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State Representative
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State Representative
23rd Middlesex District



JOAN MESCHINO
State Representative
3rd Plymouth District



LORI EHRLICH
State Representative
8th Essex District

ELIZABETH POIRIER
State Representative
14th Bristol District



CAROLE FIOLA
State Representative
6th Bristol District



PAUL DONATO
State Representative
35th Middlesex District

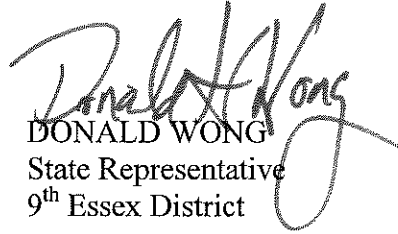


JOHN BARRETT III
State Representative
1st Berkshire District



ELIZABETH MALIA
State Representative
11th Suffolk District

JAY LIVINGSTONE
State Representative
8th Suffolk District

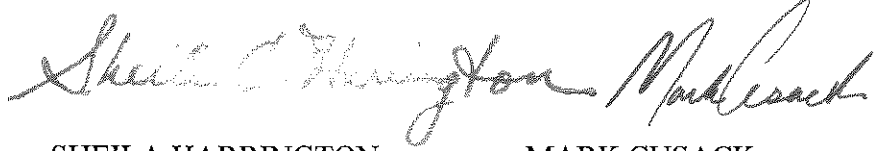


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TACKEY CHAN
State Representative
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NIKA ELUGARDO
State Representative
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SHEILA HARRINGTON
State Representative
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MARK CUSACK
State Representative
5th Norfolk District



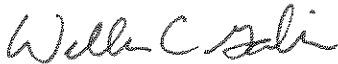
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WILLIAM GALVIN
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