



Friday, September 10, 2021

Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Rooms 312-B & 22
Boston MA 02133

RE: H3231 An Act relative to the Massachusetts Food Policy Council

Dear Chairs Pacheco and Cabral, and members of the Committee:

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative is pleased to offer this written testimony in response to H3231 An Act relative to the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, to the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight.

The Collaborative is a network of Massachusetts food system organizations, working to promote, monitor, and facilitate implementation of the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan. The Plan was developed for and accepted by the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, a 17-member entity comprising state agency, legislative, and industry representatives, established by the Legislature and Governor to develop recommendations, including legislative and regulatory changes, to promote sustainability and equity in the Commonwealth's food system.

The Plan represents the views of thousands of residents and farms, as well as hundreds of organizations and businesses. 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.

The Plan points out the need for better representation of the broader food system on the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, as stated in this recommendation:

Create additional seats on the MFPC to ensure representation of a broad range of public and private food system stakeholders. Consideration should be given to representatives of: The Governor's office; Division of Marine Fisheries; The EOEEA, specifically an individual representing the land interests of State agencies; MassDOT; UMass Extension; The newly-established stakeholder network recommended by this plan; An organization representing the interests of workforce development needs in the State.

(<https://mafoodsystem.org/plan/goal/rec/action/660/>)

H3231 directly addresses a portion of this recommendation, by adding a seat for the Division of Marine Fisheries on the Council. Massachusetts is among the top three states in the US for the value of its seafood landings. The seafood industry employs more than 100,000 workers in Massachusetts, and has an economic impact of more than \$8 billion each year. Yet this critical sector of the Commonwealth's food system has no voice on our Food Policy Council, where issues related to economics, public health, environmental impact, equitable access to food, and other important topics are discussed. This bill would remedy this situation, and we urge the committee to report it favorably.

We appreciate the Committee taking up this issue, and urge you to consider it in the context of Massachusetts' food system as a whole. The Plan, which provides that context, is available at <http://mafoodsystem.org/plan/>, and 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Winton Pitcoff', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Winton Pitcoff
Director