



September 19, 2021

Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture  
24 Beacon St.  
Room 218 and Room 473F  
Boston, MA 02133

RE: S.501/H.980 An Act promoting sustainable development and infrastructure, economic security, and fiscal responsibility with respect to climate risks

Dear Chairs Rauch and Dykema, and members of the committee:

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative is pleased to offer this testimony in response to S.501/H.980 An Act promoting sustainable development and infrastructure, economic security, and fiscal responsibility with respect to climate risks. There are opportunities to strengthen this bill to better support farmers, and the important roles they play in mitigating climate change and ensuring the Commonwealth's food security.

We support this legislation's effort to ensure climate science is used across state supported projects, including adapting state codes as set forth in Section 1 subsection 8 and Section 2.

Section 1, subsections 2 through 5 potential application and resulting costs to farm climate adaptation and mitigation projects concerns us, though we appreciate and strongly support the language under section 7(v), which exempts any adaptation measure which is designed solely to mitigate climate impacts and enhance climate resilience that relies solely on nature-based solutions. Given that state and federally supported on-farm projects may employ both nature-based solutions in concert with infrastructure and other measures and will have undergone review for appropriateness, effectiveness, and climate change issues, we advocate that agricultural projects, as defined under MGL Chapter 128A be exempt from Section 1 subsections 2 through 5 of this legislation.

We fully support the intent of Section 6 and recommend that the language be revised to include all boards, agencies, and commissions in the proposed annual program of education and training, and that the training requirements apply to all such local boards, commissions, and agencies whether volunteer in nature or not.

Farmers play a crucial role in helping the state meet its greenhouse gas emissions targets and other climate objectives. They also play a critical role in food security. But the 2017 Census of Agriculture shows that Massachusetts farmers on average have a 4% negative revenue. As a result, ensuring that state policy supports both climate change and food security, and ensures farmers' costs of production are not unnecessarily increased is essential.

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 represents the views of thousands of residents and farms, as well as hundreds of organizations and businesses. It was accepted by and is used to inform the activities of in the Massachusetts Food Policy Council in developing recommendations, including legislative and regulatory changes, to promote sustainability and

equity in the Commonwealth's food system. 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. We offer this testimony in accordance with the goals and recommendations of the Plan.

We appreciate the Committee taking up these issues. You can find the Plan and see how these issues fit into the context of Massachusetts' food system as a whole at <http://mafoodsystem.org/plan>. The Collaborative is available to provide additional information and connections to practitioners and advocates who can offer specific insights on this legislation, at the pleasure of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

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

Winton Pitcoff  
Director