



September 24, 2021

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

RE: S571 A Resolve to diversify farmland opportunities to combat climate change

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

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative is pleased to offer this written testimony in response to S571 A Resolve to diversify farmland opportunities to combat climate change.

We support this legislation's effort to create a special commission to examine opportunities for farms and agricultural lands to play a larger role in the Commonwealth's response to climate change and to propose laws and policy changes to incentivize these actions.

Farmers play a crucial and cross-sectoral role in climate change response meeting the state's greenhouse gas emissions standards and other climate objectives, such as in the environmental, water, and energy sectors. Therefore we support expanding the scope of this commission to include those and other opportunities to reach climate goals.

In order to more effectively accomplish an expanded purpose, we advocate for increasing the number of commission members and adjusting its composition to include a representative of UMass Cooperative Extension, a representative of NOFA/Mass, a representative of urban farmers, a representative of the state Buy Local network, and the Commissioner, or designee, of the Department of Environmental Protection. These representatives are subject matter experts and will provide connectivity to key stakeholders, enhancing the commission's findings.

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 the name 'Winton Pitcoff', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Winton Pitcoff  
Director