



September 19, 2021

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

RE: S.590 An Act encouraging the use of renewable energy on agricultural land

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 Senate bill 590, An Act encouraging the use of renewable energy on agricultural land.

Farmers play a crucial role in climate change response and green energy production. They also play a critical role in food security. Ensuring that state policy supports both objectives and is created and implemented within a well-coordinated framework is essential.

Two important efforts are now underway that will materially inform the best policy for renewable energy generation on farmland: EOEEA and MDAR have begun to develop a comprehensive farmland action plan, and the joint UMass Climate Hub and American Farmland Trust are conducting research on solar/farming dual use.

We believe that these two efforts should be completed before further laws are passed or regulations written regarding siting renewable energy production facilities on farmland, so that any decisions can be made based on the valuable information these reports will provide.

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,

Winton Pitcoff  
Director