



**Massachusetts Food System Collaborative  
2022 State Representative and Senator Questionnaire**

**Your name:** Becca Rausch

**Office Sought, including district:** re-election to the State Senate - Norfolk, Worcester and Middlesex (D14)

**Website:** <https://www.beccarausch.com/>

**What are three of your priorities that reflect your commitment to a healthy food system for Massachusetts and your constituents?**

**Priority 1**

As Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, I have prioritized numerous policy and budget items that advance healthy food systems, including the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) Program, the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), farmers markets, and most recently I crafted and advanced a food and agricultural equity omnibus bill (S.2880) out of committee and back to the Senate. I've also spent a great deal of time visiting and speaking directly with individuals working in farming, fishing, and other food production enterprises, listening to their concerns and working to turn those concerns into action. I am proud to partner with the Food System Collaborative in these efforts.

**Priority 2**

**Priority 3**

**How would you support the Healthy Incentives Program?**

I support the HIP program through budget funding advocacy and committee work. For example, as a member of the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities, earlier this session I voted to advance HIP legislation out of committee with a favorable report, moving the bill along in the legislative process. The bill would establish a framework for the program's long term sustainability.

**How would you support farmers in adapting to climate change?**

Climate action requires both mitigation and adaptation. To help farmers adapt to climate change, first and foremost I will continue listening to farmers to understand how the climate crisis is directly impacting their enterprises and partnering with them, as well as the Food System Collaborative, to turn those impacts into meaningful adaptation supports by the state. One relevant recent conversation with a farmer concerned state funding for farmers to shift to solar power and the challenges in applying for that monetary assistance. Additionally, I will continue my work to advance climate change mitigation measures, including reducing our Commonwealth's carbon footprint, reducing plastic use and production, and shifting from fossil fuels to green energy particularly in transportation.

**How would you help to ensure that children understand where food comes from, the importance of healthy eating, and other essential food literacy issues?**

Our schools are key components in helping children understand food systems, healthy eating, and farming. I've seen classroom and experiential education teach my own children so much about these subjects. From a very early age, they knew the difference between "go food" (the healthy stuff) and "whoa food" (the not-so-healthy stuff). As Senator, and particularly as Senate Chair of the ENRA Committee, I aim to advance both policy and funding for food education initiatives, and I'd be happy to partner with and participate in delivering food educational efforts. I am also working to help schools partner and directly contract with small local food businesses.

**What policies or investments would you support to protect farmland and increase farmland access?**

As Senate Chair of the ENRA Committee, I recently crafted and advanced a food and agricultural equity omnibus bill out of committee and back to the Senate. Among other things, the omnibus bill will promote local farming efforts. Additionally, various taxation issues could be addressed to help increase farmland access, including the contiguous 5-acre rule.

**What strategies would you support to reduce food waste?**

I strongly support statewide composting in addition to upstream educational programs and donation incentives to reduce food waste from homes and businesses, while promoting food security.

**How would you work to ensure that food system stakeholders of color - consumers, workers, farmers, landowners, and others - have equitable access to opportunities in all aspects of the food system?**

To advance equity, we need to have equitable voices at the table. The food and agricultural equity omnibus bill (S.2880) I recently advanced out of the ENRA Committee incorporates legislation to create a special commission to develop recommendations for the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture (MDAR) to more equitably serve marginalized populations, and is specifically designed to ensure individuals from marginalized communities are seated as commissioners. The bill also creates a community garden support program that would be

required, by law, to prioritize environmental justice communities. I will continue my efforts to pass this legislation and hope to expand upon these efforts next term.