



Senate Committee on Ways and Means
24 Beacon St. Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

House Committee on Ways and Means
24 Beacon St. Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

June 1, 2023

Dear conferees:

We greatly appreciate the strength of both chambers' FY24 budget proposals in relation to local food system needs. Food security is addressed in meaningful ways that demonstrate the commitment of the legislature to a sustainable, equitable, and resilient local food system.

In a few instances, the Senate and House bills proposed different levels of investment for our priorities. The following identifies the version that the Collaborative supports for each.

- **Food Literacy (7010-1192):** We support the investment of \$1,000,000 as proposed by the Senate for this program to educate school children about the food system, an effort that will support food security, public health, job readiness, and the local economy.
- **Local Food Policy Councils (2511-0100):** We support the funding level of \$250,000 as proposed in the Senate budget to continue this grant program which has had a transformative impact on these vital local networks around the Commonwealth.
- **Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) administration (2511-0100):** We support the funding level of \$11,681,576 (not inclusive of earmarks) as proposed in the Senate's budget, which will allow the Department to hire additional staff to meet increased demands for its farmland protection and marketing efforts, among other programs.
- **Food Security Infrastructure Grant program (2000-0121):** Both chambers' budget proposals support \$25,000,000 for this essential program that supports farms, food pantries, processors, and other food supply chain enterprises in helping to ensure the Commonwealth's food security. We urge the Committee to fully fund this program.

While the two chambers' budget proposals are in alignment in regard to the **Healthy Incentives Program (4400-1004)**, we caution that the PAC and additional \$5,000,000 will certainly be insufficient to keep the program operating throughout the fiscal year given increasing demand. We urge the legislature to add funding to this program in a later supplemental budget.

We encourage the conference committee to adopt these funding levels for these items, to continue the legislature's robust commitment to the Commonwealth's local food system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Winton Pitcoff, Director