September 12, 2023

Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Massachusetts State House

24 Beacon Street

Rooms 507 & 146

Boston MA 02133

RE: Testimony in support of S.85 / H.150 An Act relative to an agricultural healthy incentives program

Dear Chairs Kennedy and Livingstone, and members of the Committee:

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative is pleased to offer this written testimony in support of S.85/H.150, An Act relative to an agricultural healthy incentives program.

The Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) provides a dollar-for-dollar match, up to a monthly limit dependent on household size, for SNAP dollars spent on fruits and vegetables purchased at participating farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs across the Commonwealth. This bill will codify the program in statute and create a trust fund that would be able to accept public and private funding.

The impact on families, farms, and the local economy since HIP’s launch in April 2017 has been significant:

* SNAP recipients have purchased more than $53 million of produce from local farmers, earning back an equal amount of incentives in the process.
* According to DTA’s data, more than 200,000 households have participated in the program, representing more than 300,000 individuals. 54% of the households that have used the program include a senior, 23% include a child, 35% include a person with a disability.
* The program’s success also means annual savings of millions of dollars in public health costs, due to reductions in chronic disease and medical costs brought about by healthy eating.[[1]](#footnote-0) [[2]](#footnote-1)
* For every dollar spent on purchasing produce directly from a Massachusetts farmer, an additional $2 in local economic activity is generated, meaning HIP has stimulated at least another $106 million in financial transactions in the Commonwealth. [[3]](#footnote-2)
* For the 255 farmer vendors participating in HIP, this $53 million in increased sales has made it possible for them to hire more staff, purchase goods and services from local businesses, and employ sustainable management practices that protect farmland and other natural resources, contributing to Massachusetts’ environmental health.

Incentives that give consumers more buying power to purchase fresh and healthy food through food assistance programs have a long history of success in Massachusetts, dating back to our first-in-the-nation farmers market coupon program for WIC recipients in 1986. There is a need and opportunity to support and expand these efforts in order to: deliver SNAP and other benefits more strategically to help increase purchases of fresh, healthy, local food; demonstrate the long term viability of such incentives programs; and offer a model that can be replicated widely and sustained into the future. Many other states look to Massachusetts as a leader, as one of the only states with a statewide nutrition incentive program. Passing this bill into law this session would demonstrate the state’s continued support of HIP, which is especially important this year during the ongoing 2023 Farm Bill negotiations.

The Commonwealth has invested heavily in extensive program operating infrastructure, management, and outreach. This legislation is needed to protect that investment, and to ensure that the program and a funding source exist in statute so that it will continue to operate. This no-cost bill has been reported favorably from first reading in the last three General Courts, and we urge you to do the same this session.

The Collaborative has led the Campaign for HIP Funding for the last five years to ensure the program would be supported after the initial federal funding was exhausted. The Collaborative is a network of Massachusetts food system organizations, working to promote, monitor, and facilitate implementation of the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan (http://mafoodsystem.org/plan/). The Plan was developed for and accepted by the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, a 17-member entity comprising state agency, legislative, and industry representatives, established by the Legislature and Governor to develop recommendations, including legislative and regulatory changes, to promote sustainability and equity in the Commonwealth’s food system.

We appreciate the Committee taking up this issue, and urge you to consider it in the context of Massachusetts’ food system as a whole. We respectfully request that the Committee pass this bill favorably. The Collaborative is available to provide additional information and connections to practitioners and advocates who can offer further details, at the pleasure of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Miller

Massachusetts Food System Collaborative

Boston, MA

**On behalf of the Campaign for HIP Funding**

**Organizations**

AARP Massachusetts, Statewide

About Fresh, Boston

Alchemy Initiative, Pittsfield

All Farmers, Springfield

Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs, Boston

Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, Boston

American Academy of Pediatrics, MA Chapter, Waltham

American Farmland Trust, Northampton

American Heart Association and American Stroke

Association, Waltham

Amherst Food Co-op, Amherst

Amherst Survival Center, North Amherst

Arlington EATS, Arlington

Arlington Food Pantry, Arlington

Arlington Regional Model United Nations, Arlington

Arise for Social Justice, Springfield

Backyard Growers, Gloucester

Be Well Berkshires, Pittsfield, Great Barrington, Lee,

Lenox, Stockbridge

Berkshire Community Action Council, Inc., Berkshire County

Berkshire Farm & Table, Sheffield

Berkshire Grown, Berkshire County

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Natick

Boston Area Gleaners, Inc., Waltham

Boston Children’s Hospital, Boston

Boston Mayor's Office of Food Justice, Boston

Boston Public Health Commission, Boston

Buy Fresh Buy Local Cape Cod, Barnstable

Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee, Cambridge

Cape Ann Farmers’ Market, Gloucester

The Carrot Project, Boston

Catholic Charities Worcester County, Worcester

Central Mass Grown, Worcester

Central West Justice Center, Worcester

Children’s HealthWatch, Boston

CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture),

South Deerfield

Citizens for Citizens, Inc., Greater Fall River

CitySprouts, Boston

Clean Water Action, Statewide

Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester, Worcester

Coalition for Social Justice, Southeastern Massachusetts

Coastal Foodshed, New Bedford

CommonWealth Kitchen, Dorchester

Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc., Somerville

Community Action Pioneer Valley, Greenfield

Community Health Network of North Central Mass, 27

North Central towns

Community Servings, Jamaica Plain

Community Teamwork, Greater Lowell

Conservation Law Foundation, Boston

Easthampton Community Center, Easthampton

Ethos, Jamaica Plain

Falmouth Service Center, Inc., Falmouth

The Family Pantry of Cape Cod, Harwich

Farm Aid, Cambridge

Florence Congregational Church, Florence

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Hatfield

Food For Free Committee, Inc., Cambridge

The Food Project, Lynn

FoodCorps, Boston

FoodXChange, Boston

Franklin County Community Development Corporation,

Greenfield

Franklin County Food Council, Greenfield

Friedman Food Policy Action Council, Boston

Friendly House, Inc., Worcester

Friends of Sholan Farms, Leominster

Gardening the Community, Springfield

Ginny’s Helping Hand, Inc., Leominster

Greater Boston Food Bank, Boston

Greater Boston Nazarene Compassionate Center , Inc., Mattapan

Greater Fall River Community Food Pantry, Tiverton

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Lynn

Greening Greenfield, Greenfield

Groundwork Lawrence, Lawrence, Methuen & Haverhill

Grow Food Northampton, Northampton

Growing Places/Fitchburg Farmers Market, Leominster

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Lowell, Westford

Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Wellesley

Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, Wellesley

Health Care For All, Boston

Health Care Without Harm, Statewide

Healthy Chelsea, Chelsea

Healthy Hampshire, Northampton

HESSCO, Sharon

Hilltown Community Health Center, Worthington,

Huntington

Holyoke Office of Planning and Economic

Development/Holyoke Mass in Motion, Holyoke

Hopkinton Harvest, Inc., Hopkinton

Island Grown Initiative, Tisbury

IUW-CWA Local 81776, Marblehead

Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action, Boston

Just Roots Inc., Greenfield

Let’s Talk About Food, Cambridge

Lettuce Be Local, Sterling

LifePath, Inc., Greenfield

Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry, Worcester, MA

Lynn Economic Opportunity (LEO), Lynn, Nahant,

Swampscott, Wakefield, Saugus and Marblehead

Marion Institute, Marion

Martin Luther King Family Services, Inc., Springfield

Mass Audubon, Statewide

Mass Farmers Markets, Waltham

Mass In Motion - Fall River

Mass In Motion - New Bedford

Mass In Motion - Salem

Mass In Motion - Springfield

Mass Law Reform Institute, Boston

Massachusetts Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics,

Statewide

Massachusetts Association of Community Development

Corporations (MACDC), Boston

Massachusetts Association of Health Boards, Plainville

Massachusetts Councils on Aging, Statewide

Massachusetts Farm to School, Statewide

Massachusetts Fruit Growers Association, Statewide

Massachusetts Health Council, Statewide

Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association, Burlington

Massachusetts Public Health Association, Statewide

Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition, Boston

Merrimack Valley Food Bank, Lowell

Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Boston

Mill City Grows, Lowell

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, Athol

Murray UU Church Food Pantry, Attleboro

NAC Food Pantry, Whitinsville

New England Vegetable & Berry Growers Association,

New England

New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) , Belchertown

New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, Lowell

newedibles.com, Colrain

North Adams Council on Aging, North Adams

Northampton Survival Center, Northampton

Northeast Organic Farming Association, Massachusetts

Chapter, Barre

Nourishing the North Shore, Newburyport

Nubian United Benevolent International Association

(NUBIA) Inc., Boston

Old Colony YMCA, Brockton

The Open Pantry of Greater Lowell, Lowell

Open Table, Maynard and Concord

Plainfield Agricultural Commission, Plainfield

Positive Change for Animals, Clinton

Project Bread-Walk for Hunger, East Boston

Public Health Institute of Western MA, Western MA

Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts

(PHENOM), Statewide

Quabbin Harvest, Orange

Quabbin Food Connector, Inc., Orange

Rachel’s Table, Worcester

Regional Environmental Council of Central MA, Worcester

Revere on the Move, Revere

Rosie’s Place, Boston

Roxbury in Motion, Boston

SeniorCare, Inc., Gloucester

The Senior Center in Shelburne, Shelburne

Shape Up Somerville, Somerville

Somerville Food Security Coalition, Somerville

Southbridge Food Share, Southbridge

Southcoast Food Policy Council, Marion

Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership, South Dartmouth

Southeastern MA Food Security Network, New Bedford

Springfield Food Policy Council, Springfield

St. Anthony’s Pantry at Sacred Heart-St. Catherine of

Sweden Church, Worcester

St. James food Pantry, South Grafton

St. James Outreach Group, South Grafton

Stone Soup Cafe, Greenfield

Sustainable CAPE, Truro

Sustainable Nantucket/Community Farm Institute,

Nantucket

Tapestry, Florence

Temple Sinai, Sharon

The Nutrition Center, Inc., Great Barrington

The Open Door, Gloucester

The Trustees, Statewide

Toxics Action Center Campaigns, Boston

United Neighbors of Fall River, Fall River

Urban Farming Institute, Boston

Waltham Fields Community Farm/Community Farms

Outreach, Inc., Waltham

Western Area Mass Dietetic Association, Springfield

Western Massachusetts Health Equity Network, Amherst

WHEAT Community Connections, Clinton

Women's Lunch Place, Boston

Worcester County Food Bank, Shrewsbury

Worcester Food Policy Council, Worcester

YMCA Southcoast, New Bedford

**Farms and Farmers Markets**

Amherst Winter Farmers’ Market, Hadley

Apponagansett Farm, Dartmouth

Arrowhead Farm, Newburyport

Ashfield Farmers market, Ashfield

Ashmont Farmers Market, Dorchester

Barrett’s Mill Farm, Concord

Berberian Farm, Northborough

Belchertown Farmers Market, Belchertown

Beverly Farmers’ Market, Beverly

Bowdoin Geneva Farmers Market, Dorchester

Braintree Farmers Market, Braintree

Bree-Z-Knoll Farm, Leyden

Breezy Gardens, Leicester

Brewster Historical Society Farmers Market, Brewster

Brookfield Farm, Amherst

Brookside Family Farm, Westminster

Brox Farm, Dracut

Busa Farm and Markets, Concord, Lincoln, Lexington

Cambridge Winter Farmers Market, Cambridge

Cape Ann Farmers Market, Gloucester

Carlisle Farmers Market, Carlisle

Central Square Farmers’ Market, Cambridge

Charles Square Winter Farmers Market, Cambridge

Chestnut Hill Farm, Southborough

Citysoul Farmers Market, Springfield

Clarkdale Fruit Farms, Deerfield

Cluck & Trowel, Westport

Copley Square Farmers’ Market, Boston

Cotyledon Farm, Leicester

Coyote Hill Farm, Bernardston

Cricket Creek Farm, Williamstown

Crimson and Clover Farm, Northampton

Davis Square Farmers’ Market, Somerville

Dedham Farmers Market, Dedham

Dufresne’s Sugar House, Williamsburg

East Boston Farmers Market, East Boston

East Street Farm Stand, Tewksbury

Easthampton Farmers’ and Makers’ Market, Easthampton

Eastie Farm, East Boston

Eden Pond Farm, Bernardston

Elliot Farm, Lakeville

F3 Farm, New Bedford

Farm Direct Coop, Marblehead

Farmer Dave’s, Dracut

Farmers’ Market at Forest Park, Springfield

Farm Direct Co-op, Marblehead

First-Flower Farm, Great Barrington

Fitchburg Farmers Market, Fitchburg

Flats Mentor Farm, Lancaster

Florence Farmers Market, Florence

Flourish Farm, Brimfield

Foppema’s Farm LLC, Northbridge

Four Star Farms, Northfield

Freedom Food Farm, Raynham

Fresh Truck, Boston

Front Yard Farm, Ware

Fungi Ally, Hadley

Gibney Gardens, Danvers

GO Farm, Amherst

Good Bunch Farm, Conway

Gooseberry Farm, West Springfield

GraftonFarmers’ Market, Grafton

Granny’s Place, Agawam

Graylight Farm, Lee

Grow Education, New Bedford

Hager’s Farm Market, Shelburne

Harper’s Farm & Garden, Lancaster

Hart Farm, Conway

Healthy Futures Farm, Westport

Heart Beets Farm, Berkley

Hill Orchard, Westford

Holiday Brook Farm, Pittsfield, Dalton

Holly Hill Farm, Cohasset

Holyoke Farmers’ Market, Holyoke

Holyoke Food and Equity Collective, Holyoke

Indian Line Farm, Great Barrington

Intervale Farm, Westhampton

Just Roots, Greenfield

Justamere Tree Farm, Worthington

Ladybug Farm Produce, Hubbardston

Lane Gardens & Oakdale Farms, Dighton, Rehoboth,

Seekonk

Lanni Orchards, Lunenburg

Langwater Farm, Easton

Leominster Marketplace, Leominster

Lexington Farmers Market, Lexington

Long Life Farm, Hopkinton

Lynn Central Square Farmers’ Market, Lynn

Lyonsville Farm, Colrain

MacArthur Farm, Holliston

Manda Farm, Plainfield

Many Forks Farm, Clarkburg

Many Hands Organic Farm, Barre

Marini Farm LLC, Ipswich

Mary’s Garden, Southbridge

Mattapan Farmers Market, Mattapan

McKinstry Market Garden Inc., Chicopee

Medway Community Farm, Inc, Medway

Mill City Grows, Lowell

Moonlight Farm, Ashby

Moonlight rose, Swansea

Movement Ground Farm, Berkley

Mycoterra Farm, South Deerfield

MX Morningstar Farm, Copake

Natick Farmers Market, Natick

The Neighborhood Farm, Boston

Nest and Song Farm, Westport

New Bedford Farmers Markets, New Bedford

Next Barn Over Farm, Hadley

The Newburyport Farmers’ Market, Newburyport

Newton Farmers’ Market, Newton

Northampton Farmers Market, Northampton

Nuestras Raices, Holyoke

Nutwood Farm, Cummington

Oak Square Farmers Market, Brighton

Old Friends Farm, Amherst

Original Easton Farmers Market, Easton

Out There Organics, Truro

Overlook Farm, Brookfield

Paradise Hill Farm/Boan Farm, Westport

Park Hill Orchard, Easthampton

Patti’s Patch, Middleboro

Pignatare’s Farm, Westfield

Quabbin Harvest, Orange

Rainbow Harvest Farm, Greenfield

REC Community Farmers Markets, Worcester

Red Apple Farm, Red Apple Farm

Red Fire Farm, Montague, Granby

Revere Farmers Market, Revere

ReVision Urban Farm, Dorchester

Rice’s Roots Farm, Petersham

River Street Gardens, Halifax

Riverdale Farm, Groton

Roslindale Village Main Street, Roslindale

Sabatia Flower Farm, Barnstable

Sally Frank’s Farmers’ Market, Melrose

Sapowsky Farms, Granby

Seeds of Solidarity, Orange

Sentinel Farm, Belchertown

Shelburne Falls Farmers Market, Shelburne Falls

Sibling Organic Crops, Brockton

Siena Farms, Sudbury

Silverbrook Farm, Dartmouth

Simple Gifts Farm, Amherst

Skinny Dip Farm, Westport

Somerville Winter Farmers Market, Somerville

Souza Family Farm, Rehoboth

Springfield Central Downtown Farmers’ Market,

Springfield

Stoneham farmers market, Stoneham

Stony Hill Farm, Wilbraham

Stoughton Farmers Market, Stoughton

Summit farm, Belchertown

Sweet Birch Herbals, Northampton

Sweet Morning Farm, Leyden

Tangerini’s Farm, Millis, Natick

The Atherton Farm, Buckland

The Benson Place, Heath

The New Bedford Farmers Market, New Bedford

Three Sisters Garden Project, Ipswich

Trotwood Acres Farm, Westfield

Truro Educational Farmers’ Market, Truro

Two Field Farm, Wayland

Under the Sun Farm, North Dighton

Under the sun farm, Raynham

Union Square Farmers Market, Somerville

Upinngil, Gill

Upswing farm, Ashland, Holliston

Urban Artisan Farm Inc., Springfield

Urban Farming Institute, Dorchester

Valley Opportunity Council, Chicopee

Wakefield Farmers Market, Wakefield

Wally’s Vegetables, Haverhill

Watertown Farmers’ Market, Watertown

Wayland Winter/Summer Farmers’ Markets, Wayland

We Grow Microgreens, Boston

Winchester Farmers Market, Winchester

Winchester Farmers Market Community Hub Inc.,

Winchester

Wright-Locke Farm, Winchester

1. <https://www.jsi.com/resource/evaluation-of-the-healthy-incentives-program-an-analysis-of-the-state-of-massachusettss-food-insecurity-nutrition-incentive-grant-program/> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. <https://childrenshealthwatch.org/an-avoidable-2-4-billion-cost-food-insecurity-and-hunger-in-massachusetts/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. <https://www.buylocalfood.org/buy-local/local-food-calculator/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)