

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 7, 2024

Dear Conferees:

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative greatly appreciates the strength of the proposed fiscal year 2025 budget proposals to support local food system needs. The legislature's commitment to a sustainable, equitable, and resilient local food system is clear in its continued support for many programs.

The Collaborative has identified where the Senate and House bills proposed different levels of investment for our priorities.

- **Healthy Incentives Program (4400-1004):** We support the funding level of \$20,000,000 proposed by the Senate, and the year-round program operation language in the line item from the House. The Collaborative cautions that \$20M will not be sufficient to keep HIP operating throughout the 2025 fiscal year given increasing program usage by SNAP recipients. Fully funding HIP will allow farmers to continue to make investments in their businesses, and support the local economy. We urge the legislature to add \$5 million in additional funding to HIP in a later supplemental budget.
- **Food Literacy (7010-1192):** We support the investment of \$1,000,000 proposed by the Senate for this program to support the continuation of a funded school wellness coaching program, which helps develop local policies, and another round of the FRESH grants.
- **Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) administration (2511-0100):** We support the funding level of \$11,233,075 as proposed by the Governor, and the \$150,000 earmark for the Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment as proposed by the House. This will allow the Department to continue its important programming to protect farmland, increase food security, and further equity and justice in agriculture.
- **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 supports networks performing outreach for HIP, creating new local food assessments and plans and working to implement them, and working to connect more food insecure residents to available resources.
- **Food Security Infrastructure Grant program (2511-0111):** We support the investment of \$25,300,000 proposed by the House for this essential program that supports farms, food pantries, processors, and other food supply chain enterprises in ensuring the Commonwealth's food security.

The Collaborative encourages the FY2025 Budget Conference Committee to adopt the above-listed funding levels to continue the legislature's robust commitment to the Commonwealth's local food system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Miller, Policy Director