



September 9, 2026

Senator Michael Rodrigues, Chair
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St., Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

RE: H.5576 / S.3228, An Act relative to economic development in the Commonwealth

Dear Conferees:

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative appreciates the House and Senate's Economic Development bond proposals in relation to the Commonwealth's local food system needs. In this bill, the Legislature addresses agritourism, food science, and other needs in significant ways.

The Collaborative supports a local, equitable, sustainable, resilient and connected food system; some of our priorities, funding for food innovation and technology, agritourism and support of our shellfish industry were supported through this bill. However, the Senate and House proposed different levels of investment for these priorities. The Collaborative supports the following, and ask that the Conference Committee do the same, including:

- Line item 7002-8083, increase from \$10 million to \$15 million for food science, agricultural enterprises, resilient and sustainable food innovation, food and agricultural technology and related sectors, as proposed by the Senate.
- Line item 7002-8086, addition of \$5 million to be used for agritourism, as proposed by the Senate. This funding will support one of the fastest growing segments of Massachusetts agriculture. Agritourism is a key strategy farmers use to continue to remain economically viable, and the development of this grant will help more farmers develop these types of activities.
- Earmark within line item 7002-8087, \$100,000 relief for commercial shellfish harvesters, as proposed by the House. This fund will complement the \$300,000 authorized and spent by the Healey-Driscoll Administration to support aquaculture producers who suffered losses due to the Haverhill sewer line break in July 2026, which occurred at the height of the growing season for these producers.
- Outside Section 110 of H.5576 / 172 of S.3228 - the Collaborative has long supported the development of a consistent, statewide permitting process for food trucks. The current system requires businesses to file permits with each municipality they sell in, which has resulted in a cumbersome and potentially time consuming process. We appreciate the inclusion of this section in both chambers' proposals.



The Collaborative also suggests the following regarding policy language in this bill, including;

- Language within line item 7002-8083, as proposed by the House, creating a carveout within the Food Security Infrastructure Grant program; “provided further, that the department of agricultural resources shall establish a micro-grant tier within the food security infrastructure program for commercial working farms operating on less than 100 acres; provided further, that said tier shall utilize an expedited, low-barrier application and compliance process designed for family-owned and generational agricultural operations to secure capital for climate adaptive upgrades, including advanced drip irrigation, soil-erosion controls and crop canopy protection” USDA data show that the average Massachusetts farm size is 66 acres¹. We appreciate the intent of this language, but believe this additional track is unnecessary, as the program has made awards to small farmers², and we have filed a public records request with MDAR on the average size of a farm that has been awarded an FSIG grant. There are minimal staff that manage the FSIG program, and with the state's FTE cap policy in effect, there is no additional capacity to run a micro-tier. Additionally, MDAR’s Climate Smart Agriculture Program serves this climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience niche, and this could be duplicative of that existing work. Finally, this line item is under EOED’s purview, not MDAR’s.
- Outside Section 111, as proposed by the Senate. We support diverse methods of keeping farmers viable. We believe for this policy to be successful for all types of growers, a requirement should be added to this section that the land being withdrawn from Chapter 61A not be in agricultural or horticultural use for any portion of the five years prior to withdrawal. Additionally, we would encourage the addition to this section of a requirement that the new energy generating source be constructed and online within three years from the land’s withdrawal from Chapter 61A. We appreciate the work that has been put into this policy and its history, but remain concerned about its impact on other types of agriculture besides cranberry growing if these guardrails are not put into place.

The Collaborative encourages the Conference Committee to adopt the above policy items and authorization levels, to continue the Legislature’s commitment to the Commonwealth’s local food system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Miller, Policy Director

¹https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Massachusetts/cp99025.pdf

²<https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-healey-awards-nearly-7-million-to-support-local-farms-fisheries-and-food-banks>