



December 11, 2025

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

RE: S.2542, An Act to Build Resilience for Massachusetts Communities

Dear Chair Rodrigues and Vice-Chair Comerford,

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative is pleased to offer this written testimony in support of S.2542, the MassReady Act, as we expect it to move forward to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative was established to promote, monitor, and facilitate implementation of the [Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan](#), accepted by the state in 2015. The Collaborative leads collective action towards a sustainable, equitable, resilient local food system through advocacy campaigns and networks. We work with hundreds of food system partners across the Commonwealth who help us identify our legislative priorities, including farmland access and protection, food security, and more.

The MassReady Act, or the Environmental Bond Bill, proposes funding for a number of agricultural programs specifically supported by the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan (LFAP), and we urge the Committee to support the items below, in accordance with the Plan's goals. Specifically:

We support the Administration's proposal for authorizing funding the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) Program at \$125 million in line item 2511-0124. FSIG has been transformative since it was introduced during the pandemic, and has supported farmers, fishermen, food hubs, and food access work, including food rescue operations and more.¹ We are especially concerned about this program, as it is our understanding that there is no money programmed for FSIG in the FY27 capital improvement plan (CIP)² until the MassReady Act is passed by the legislature. FSIG is a critical program, and we know MDAR is planning to release a report on the first five years of FSIG sometime this winter. A gap in program operations would be disruptive immediately after the release of such a report.

We urge the committee to support the \$42 million as proposed by the Administration for the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program, and land acquisition efforts more broadly, in line item 2511-0125. We also urge the extension of the remaining \$20 million in bond authorizations for the program from the 2018 bond bill. Authorizing these funds allows the Commonwealth to

¹ <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/ff6047ccc6974ed49fd2bba2751b4999/page/Map>

² <https://budget.digital.mass.gov/capital/fy26/beneficiary-agency/energy-and-environmental-affairs/eo-of-energy-and-environmental-affairs/?tab=by-year&subtab=fy2027>



take advantage of matching funds from the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), which allows Massachusetts to permanently protect farmland very cost-effectively. We also urge the Committee to specifically carve out \$20 million in funding for MDAR's new buy protect sell authority in this line item.

The MassReady Act also supports a number of capital grant programs in line item 2500-7022, including the farm viability enhancement program, the climate smart agriculture program, the urban agriculture program, compost, the implementation of the 2023 Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan, and more. These programs support a range of management practices and activities that are mentioned throughout the Plan, including energy conservation and food safety. In sum, we urge the Committee to increase the authorization to \$39,000,000 for this line, as well as the extension of \$26,000,000 remaining balance from previous authorizations; demand for these programs has been and will continue to be high as the federal government shirks its responsibility to prepare farmers for climate change.

We also support outside sections 4-5, which add the UMass Center for Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment and Department of Marine Fisheries to the Massachusetts Food Policy Council.

Finally, we support outside sections 17-18, which grant MDAR a right of first refusal, in second position behind the municipality where the land is located, to support MDAR's new buy, protect, and sell authority. We are concerned that MDAR would be allowed to assign its option to the Department of Conservation and Recreation under this section, and suggest replacing this with a requirement to license or sell the land, with an Agricultural Preservation Restriction, to a farmer. DCR has a different organizational mission and the goal of conserving farmland is to keep it in active agricultural production. Additionally, as the 120-day notice runs equally to both the town and state, the opportunity for the state to exercise could be constrained if the town is slow to make up its mind. We'd suggest potentially adding language requiring the town to have to give notice to the state within 90 days of its intent to exercise or not. This way, the clock wouldn't run out before the state could move. We are working with our land trust partners on further comments on this section.

In addition to the language already in the bill, the Collaborative recommends the following:

- We ask that the Committee include the language in section 12 establishing a next generation farmer fund from S.2801, *An Act Fostering Agricultural Resilience in Massachusetts*. According to the 2022 Agriculture Census, the average age of a Massachusetts farmer is 58, and about one-third of Massachusetts' farms will be sold to new owners in the coming decades, according to projections from American Farmland Trust and Land for Good. Massachusetts needs to prepare the next generation of farmers to succeed, and support the work of vocational technical schools and community based organizations that are doing this work.
- The 2015 LFAP recommends legislation "to ensure no net loss of land protected under Article 97 of the state constitution." S.549, *An Act investing in natural and working lands* has model language for this policy and we encourage the Committee to add this language as an outside section to slow the rate of farmland loss.



- PFAS, or forever chemicals, are a growing concern in soil and water. We ask that the Committee add language from S.56, *An act protecting our soils and farms from PFAS contamination*, that would establish indemnity for farmers and set up a fund for farmers to test and receive technical assistance if their farms are affected by PFAS contamination.
- Finally, we support the addition of a \$5.5 million earmark in line-item 2000-7082 for the Healthy Soils Program, as supported by the Healthy Soils Coalition. From our conversations with the Administration, we understand that this amount is supported in the line item.

As the federal Administration continues to cancel awarded grants, change eligibility for programs, and decimate federal agency staffing levels, Massachusetts should continue to step up, especially in land access and climate funding. As legislation that is only debated once every five years, this bond bill is a significant opportunity to protect farmland, support farmers, and address significant issues in the local food system; we cannot let it go by without serious action.

We appreciate the Committee's commitment to considering environmental, land, and food issues systemically. We are happy to provide further information on any of these requests at the Committee's pleasure. This bill represents a significant portion of the Commonwealth's investment in a sustainable, resilient and equitable food system, and we urge the Committee to use the Plan (<https://mafoodsystem.org/plan/>) as a resource when deliberating these elements of the bill.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Miller, Policy Director