

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, 2026

Dear Conferees:

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative greatly appreciates the strength of both chambers' Fiscal Year 2027 budget proposals in relation to local food system needs. Food security and climate preparedness is addressed in meaningful ways that demonstrate the commitment of the Massachusetts 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 the Collaborative's priorities. The following list identifies the funding level that will support a more sustainable, equitable, resilient and connected food system in Massachusetts:

- **Healthy Incentives Program** (4400-1004): We deeply appreciate the strong level of support this program enjoyed from both chambers. Our Campaign for HIP Funding requests the \$29,700,000 as proposed by the Senate budget; this level will continue to support year-round operation of HIP at the restored benefit levels, and allow DTA to add new farmers for the first time since 2022.
- **Food Literacy** (7010-1192): We support the investment of \$1,000,000, as proposed by the Senate, to allow DESE to continue the School Wellness Coaching Program, launch another round of the FRESH Grant, and develop a new Harvest of the Month curriculum resource.
- **MDAR administrative budget** (2511-0100): We support the \$10.2 million proposed by the House. The agency has seen increased responsibilities over the last few years, and needs increased administrative capacity. We are concerned by the real possibility that a decreased administrative budget will result in less support for farmers.
- **Local Food Policy Councils** (earmark within 2511-0100): We support the funding level of \$250,000 as proposed by the Senate for a fourth round of this grant program, which has had a transformative impact on municipal food systems around the Commonwealth.
- **DTA Caseworker funding** (4400-1100) - We support level funding of \$147 million as proposed by the Senate, and emphasize the need for additional caseworkers to deal with the increased bureaucracy and complexity from the passage of OB3. If low-income households lose access to SNAP, they lose HIP, which means less dollars for the local economy.
- **Disaster Relief and Resiliency Fund** (outside section): We appreciate the support of both chambers and request the funding level of \$20,000,000 as proposed by the Senate. State relief was an essential part of the recovery process for farmers from the disastrous 2023 growing season, as federal relief is still in limbo due to the Trump Administration's policies. We strongly support this program's development as the impacts of global warming continue to intensify.

We encourage the Conference Committee to adopt the above 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,

Rebecca Miller, Policy Director