



May 13, 2026

House Committee on Ways and Means
24 Beacon St.
Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

RE: S.3064, An Act to Build Resilience for Massachusetts Communities

Dear Chair Michlewitz,

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative is pleased to offer this written testimony in support of S.3064, the MassReady Act, also known as the environmental bond bill.

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 proposes funding for a number of agricultural programs specifically supported by the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan (LFAP), and we urge this Committee to support the items listed below. The Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan was created by more than one thousand local farmers, consumers, advocates and policy makers to increase production, sales and consumption of Massachusetts-grown foods while maximizing the environmental benefits of agriculture and fishing; the items below are offered to this Committee in accordance with the Plan's goals. Specifically:

We support the Healey-Driscoll 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 the program was introduced after advocacy to the Food Security Task Force during the pandemic, and the funds have supported farmers, fishermen, food hubs, schools, food pantries, food rescue operations and more.¹ Despite this, the program has had an uneven funding history; relying on CARES Act, ARPA funds, and economic development bond bills to continue. 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 Legislature passes the MassReady Act. The most recent round of FSIG grants is expected to award between \$8 - 11 million; the application period closed in May, and applicants requested around \$43 million for various projects, demonstrating the program's impact and need. FSIG is a critical program, and we believe MDAR is planning to release a report on the tremendous

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>



positive impacts of the first five years of FSIG sometime soon. Further, FSIG was also included in the recommendations of the report of Governor Healey's Anti-Hunger Task Force³, and efforts are being made to implement the recommendation to serve all parts of the food system, especially the middle of the supply chain.

We urge the committee to support the \$42 million as proposed by the Administration for the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program 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 opens up the Commonwealth's ability to take advantage of matching funds from the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), which allows Massachusetts to permanently protect farmland very cost-effectively.

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 capital grant programs support a range of management practices and activities that are mentioned as goals throughout the aforementioned Plan, including energy conservation and food safety. We urge the Committee to commit to the \$26 million proposed by the Administration in this line item and extend the \$26 million remaining balance from previous authorizations; demand for these programs has been and will continue to be high as the federal government abandons its commitment to prepare farmers for climate change. We would also specifically like to see the urban agriculture grant program continue to be earmarked with \$5 million in this line item, as was the case in the 2018 environmental bond bill. The Urban Agriculture program has the potential to see increasing growth, if the Legislature passes the Vacant Lots to Farms Bill (H.121 as filed in the current session) passes, and increasing local food production is one solution many of our partners are looking to as the accessibility of SNAP decreases.

We also support outside sections 7 and 8, which add the UMass Center for Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment and Department of Marine Fisheries to the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, as proposed by the Administration. These partners already attend these meetings and with an official seat at the table they can further communicate about their work to support farmers, food producers, and fishermen.

Finally, we support outside section 32, which grants MDAR a right of first refusal, in second position behind the municipality where the land is located, to support MDAR's new Buy-Protect-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. DCR has previously purchased active farmland and taken it out of production.

³ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/anti-hunger-task-force-recommendations>



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

- We urge the Committee to specifically capitalize MDAR's new as of November 2024 Buy-Protect-Sell authority with \$10 million in the APR or EEA land acquisition line item. Other EEA agencies have seen these authorizations capitalized and we believe MDAR should have the same support. Without this specific capitalization, there will be less money for land acquisition as agencies divide up the EEA allocation in the CIP. This capitalization is needed so MDAR can support new and beginning farmers by buying land and making it available at more affordable prices to these farmers. Farmers are facing a crisis; many cannot afford to retire without selling their land and young farmers cannot afford to buy the land. Massachusetts has some of the most expensive farmland in the country at \$15,000 per acre, according to the USDA⁴.
- We also urge the Committee to create a new Working Capital Loan Fund, and capitalize it with \$10 million, to assist farms with loans when events like barn fires, silo collapses, and other large capital infrastructure failures occur, administered by a Community Development Financial Institution or other qualified entity. Right now, MDAR has no programs to assist farmers when barn fires or silo collapses occur, and farmers are forced to rely on individual fundraising to recover, taking time away from other aspects of their farm business. This could potentially be added to the 2500-7022 line item.
- Finally, we urge the Committee to address PFAS, or forever chemicals, in this bill, as they are a growing contamination concern in soil and water. We ask that the Committee add language from H.109 that would ban the land application of biosolids / sludge by 2030, as these materials have been tested repeatedly and are clearly contaminated with PFAS. We also request that language from the above bill creating an Agricultural PFAS Relief Fund, for farmers to test and receive technical assistance if their farms are affected by PFAS contamination, and capitalize it with \$50 million, be added to the bond bill. Maine has led the nation in responding to PFAS contamination on farms, and these actions follow their footsteps.

As the federal Administration continues to cancel awarded grants, change eligibility for programs, and decimate federal agency staffing levels, Massachusetts should continue to support its environmental agencies, especially in addressing challenges like land access, climate adaptation, and emerging threats like PFAS. 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

⁴ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Charts_and_Maps/graphics/farm_value_map.pdf



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