SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1138 FILED ON: 1/17/2019

SENATE . . . . . No. 482

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Anne M. Gobi

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act regarding a farmland protection and viability action plan.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
Anne M. Gobi	*Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire and Middlesex*	
Paul A. Schmid, III	*8th Bristol*	*1/28/2019*
José F. Tosado	*9th Hampden*	*1/28/2019*
Daniel M. Donahue	*16th Worcester*	*1/29/2019*
Angelo M. Scaccia	*14th Suffolk*	*1/30/2019*
Harold P. Naughton, Jr.	*12th Worcester*	*1/31/2019*
Joanne M. Comerford	*Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester*	*1/31/2019*
Ryan C. Fattman	*Worcester and Norfolk*	*2/1/2019*
Susannah M. Whipps	*2nd Franklin*	*2/1/2019*
Bruce E. Tarr	*First Essex and Middlesex*	*2/1/2019*
Hannah Kane	*11th Worcester*	*2/1/2019*
Jack Patrick Lewis	*7th Middlesex*	*2/1/2019*

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By Ms. Gobi, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 482) of Anne M. Gobi, Paul A. Schmid, III, José F. Tosado, Daniel M. Donahue and other members of the General Court for legislation relative to a farmland protection and viability action plan. Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)

An Act regarding a farmland protection and viability action plan.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the secretary of energy and environmental affairs, in consultation with the farmland protection and viability advisory commission established into subsection (b), shall develop a farmland protection and viability plan. The plan shall set forth the commonwealth's goals, priorities and recommended actions for farmland protection and access to reflect the importance of farmlands of the commonwealth to its citizens who derive their livelihoods from farming, the food that is produced, and the importance of protected farmland for ecosystem health and biodiversity.

The plan shall include, but not be limited to: (i) an inventory of state land in active agricultural production or that is potentially suitable for farming; (ii) a review of state agency policies related to the use or lease of land for farming and recommendations related to state policies for the use and lease of state-owned land for farming; (iii) an analysis of recent trends and potential threats related to farmland loss and conversion and its recommendations, including

resources necessary to improve state data collection for farmland trends and to establish a system for tracking acres of farmland in production over time; (iv) recommended statutory, regulatory or policy revisions to the agricultural preservation restriction program to support the long-term economic viability of protected farms, to address housing needs and to ensure the program is managed in a transparent and consistent manner and with policies that keep pace with changes in agriculture and associated markets; (v) an analysis of farmland enrolled in a program under chapter 61A of the General Laws and recommendations for improving enrollment of farmland in the program; and (vi) measurable statewide goals and benchmarks related to farmland conversion, farmland protection and farmland access and recommendations for state policy changes and program funding levels to meet these goals and benchmarks. The plan may include maps, illustrations and other media and shall be based on best available science and best management practices.

(b) There shall be a farmland protection and viability advisory commission to assist the secretary in developing the farmland action plan. The commission shall be chaired by a farmer and to be appointed by the secretary and shall consist of: 2 members of the senate or a designee, 1 of whom shall be appointed by the minority leader; 2 members of the house of representatives or a designee, 1 of whom shall be appointed by the minority leader; 1 member of the board of food and agriculture; the commissioner of agricultural resources or a designee; a representative of the Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst; a representative of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation; a representative of The Trustees of Reservations; a representative of the American Farmland Trust; and 3 persons to be appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be a farmer, 1 of whom shall be a representative of

an urban agriculture organization, 1 of whom shall be a representative of a farmland access organization.

The advisory commission shall meet at least quarterly and otherwise at the discretion of the chair. The commission shall make recommendations to the secretary for the proper management and development of the farmland protection and viability plan.

(c) The farmland action plan shall be delivered to the joint committee on environment, natural resources and agriculture not later than December 31, 2020. The executive office of energy and environmental affairs and the department of agricultural resources shall provide technical support to the commission.

(d) The secretary shall develop and implement a public outreach and information program to provide information to the public regarding the farmland action plan.