

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 87**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

*Natalie M. Blais*

*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 promoting equity in agriculture.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Natalie M. Blais</i>	<i>1st Franklin</i>	<i>1/13/2023</i>
<i>Mindy Domb</i>	<i>3rd Hampshire</i>	<i>1/17/2023</i>
<i>Vanna Howard</i>	<i>17th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/21/2023</i>
<i>Joanne M. Comerford</i>	<i>Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester</i>	<i>1/24/2023</i>
<i>Hannah Kane</i>	<i>11th Worcester</i>	<i>1/25/2023</i>
<i>Susannah M. Whipps</i>	<i>2nd Franklin</i>	<i>1/25/2023</i>
<i>Smitty Pignatelli</i>	<i>3rd Berkshire</i>	<i>1/26/2023</i>
<i>Patricia A. Duffy</i>	<i>5th Hampden</i>	<i>1/26/2023</i>
<i>Lindsay N. Sabadosa</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>	<i>1/26/2023</i>
<i>Carol A. Doherty</i>	<i>3rd Bristol</i>	<i>1/29/2023</i>
<i>Michael P. Kushmerek</i>	<i>3rd Worcester</i>	<i>2/1/2023</i>
<i>Paul A. Schmid, III</i>	<i>8th Bristol</i>	<i>2/1/2023</i>
<i>Margaret R. Scarsdale</i>	<i>1st Middlesex</i>	<i>2/3/2023</i>
<i>Jon Santiago</i>	<i>9th Suffolk</i>	<i>2/6/2023</i>
<i>Mary S. Keefe</i>	<i>15th Worcester</i>	<i>2/6/2023</i>
<i>Thomas M. Stanley</i>	<i>9th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/7/2023</i>
<i>Paul McMurtry</i>	<i>11th Norfolk</i>	<i>2/8/2023</i>
<i>Tricia Farley-Bouvier</i>	<i>2nd Berkshire</i>	<i>2/8/2023</i>

<i>James C. Arena-DeRosa</i>	<i>8th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/10/2023</i>
<i>Brian M. Ashe</i>	<i>2nd Hampden</i>	<i>2/10/2023</i>
<i>Erika Uytterhoeven</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/13/2023</i>
<i>Daniel Cahill</i>	<i>10th Essex</i>	<i>2/17/2023</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>	<i>2/19/2023</i>
<i>Walter F. Timilty</i>	<i>Norfolk, Plymouth and Bristol</i>	<i>2/21/2023</i>
<i>Samantha Montaño</i>	<i>15th Suffolk</i>	<i>2/26/2023</i>
<i>Christine P. Barber</i>	<i>34th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/27/2023</i>
<i>Natalie M. Higgins</i>	<i>4th Worcester</i>	<i>3/16/2023</i>
<i>Carlos González</i>	<i>10th Hampden</i>	<i>4/4/2023</i>
<i>Joan B. Lovely</i>	<i>Second Essex</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>

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By Representative Blais of Deerfield, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 87) of Natalie M. Blais and others for legislation to establish a special commission (including members of the General Court) to develop recommendations for supporting investments, policies and practices designed to promote equity in agriculture for socially disadvantaged groups. Agriculture.

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)**

An Act promoting equity in agriculture.

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

1           (a) There shall be a special legislative commission on agricultural equity to develop  
2 recommendations for supporting investments, policies and practices designed to promote equity  
3 in agriculture for socially disadvantaged groups in the commonwealth. For the purposes of this  
4 section, “socially disadvantaged groups” shall include people who have, or whose lineage has,  
5 been historically or systematically excluded from, or have had less access to resources and  
6 opportunities based on cultural, racial, or ethnic prejudice based on their identity as a member of  
7 a group rather than for their individual qualities. These groups include, but are not limited to,  
8 African Americans, Cape Verdeans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Caribbean  
9 Islanders, Native Americans and Alaskan Natives.

10           (b) The commission shall consist of: the commissioner of agricultural resources or a  
11 designee; the chairs of the committee on environment, natural resources and agriculture or their  
12 designees; 1 member appointed by the Massachusetts Black and Latino legislative caucus; 1

13 member appointed by the Massachusetts Asian legislative caucus; 2 members appointed by the  
14 Massachusetts food system legislative caucus, to be selected through an open nomination process  
15 under criteria developed by the caucus; 2 members appointed by the commissioner of  
16 agricultural resources who shall represent Buy Local organizations funded by the department; 2  
17 members appointed by the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative; 1 member appointed by  
18 the commission on the status of African Americans; 2 members appointed by a Massachusetts-  
19 based farming association; 2 members appointed by non-profit organizations whose primary  
20 purpose is working with farmers from socially disadvantaged groups; 1 member appointed by the  
21 commission on the status of Latinos and Latinas; 1 member appointed by the commission on the  
22 status of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; 1 member appointed by the commission on  
23 Indian affairs; 1 member appointed by Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation; 1 member  
24 appointed by the Massachusetts Federation of Farmers Markets; and 1 member appointed by the  
25 Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts at  
26 Amherst. The appointing authorities shall appoint members knowledgeable in agriculture and  
27 who represent a diversity of knowledge of urban and rural agricultural practices and experiences.  
28 The commission shall be co-chaired by the commissioner of agricultural resources and a member  
29 of the commission chosen by the members.

30 (b) The commission shall investigate and study ways to increase equity in agriculture in  
31 the commonwealth, and shall prepare a report that shall include, but not be limited to,  
32 recommendations for: (i) data collection and dissemination; (ii) benchmark development and  
33 targeting areas of need; (iii) transparency for grantmaking to promote equitable access to grant  
34 programs and equitable distribution of funds; (iv) generating greater equity in the laws,  
35 regulations and other policies that regulate and support agriculture in the commonwealth,

36 including, but not limited to, legislative, regulatory and sub-regulatory processes; (v) improving  
37 equity in the programs and services offered by the department of agricultural resources  
38 including, but not limited to, those programs regarding land access and protection, farmer  
39 technical assistance and education, marketing and others; (iv) the ongoing role of the  
40 commission or another representative body in supporting the implementation and monitoring of  
41 these equity goals; and (v) a plan for implementation, including a timeline.

42 (c) The department of agricultural resources shall furnish reasonable staff and other  
43 support for the work of the commission. Members of the commission may receive  
44 reimbursement for the reasonable expenses incurred in carrying out their responsibilities as  
45 members of the commission under procedures established by the department.

46 (d) The commission shall hold 3 or more public hearings in various regions of the  
47 commonwealth, including 1 in a rural area and 1 in an urban area with potential for increased  
48 urban agriculture. Not more than 18 months after the effective date of this act, the commission  
49 shall file a report on the results of its investigation and study together with its findings and  
50 recommendations, including any drafts of legislation necessary to carry out those  
51 recommendations, with the clerks of the senate and house of representatives, the senate and  
52 house committees on ways and means and the joint committee on environment, natural resources  
53 and agriculture. The report shall be posted on the website of the department of agricultural  
54 resources.