

HOUSE No. 4855

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, December 31, 2025.

The committee on Agriculture and Fisheries, to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 121) of Patricia A. Duffy and others relative to the conversion of vacant lots to farms, community gardens, and other agricultural enterprises in environmental justice populations, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 4855) ought to pass.

For the committee,

NATALIE M. BLAIS.

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In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)

An Act relative to urban farmland.

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

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 29 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
2 section 2LLLLLL the following section:-

3 Section 2MMMMMM. (a) For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall,
4 unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

5 “Vacant lot”, a property that is not being actively used or occupied and that has not been
6 actively used or occupied within at least the preceding 1 year, including, but not limited to,
7 abandoned, empty and foreclosed properties. This definition shall not apply to a property which
8 is undergoing renovations or repairs due to fire or other casualty.

9 “Urban agriculture”, an activity that meets the definition of agriculture in section 1A of
10 chapter 128 and that takes place in urban and suburban areas.

11 (b) There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate
12 fund to be known as the Vacant Lots to Urban Agriculture Fund. The fund shall be administered

by the department of agricultural resources. The fund shall be credited with: (i) revenue from appropriations or other money authorized by the general court and specifically designated to be credited to the fund; (ii) funds from public and private sources such as gifts, grants and donations; and (iii) interest earned on monies in the fund. Amounts credited to the fund shall not be subject to further appropriation and any money remaining in the fund at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the General Fund; provided, however, that such contributions shall not be further restricted by the donor or used by the commonwealth for any other purpose.

(c) The purpose of the fund established in subsection (b) shall be to support the conversion of vacant lots to farms, community gardens and other agricultural enterprises. Priority consideration shall be given to projects located in environmental justice populations, as defined in section 62 of chapter 30, that support increased economic development, food security, climate and heat resilience, agricultural education, job training, donation of food to food insecure residents, public engagement, utilization of controlled-climate growing infrastructure and agricultural systems or other climate-smart agricultural practices. Said grants shall be awarded for: (i) municipalities to collaboratively develop urban farming and gardening plans with residents, local food system businesses, non-profit organizations or other organizations and a regional planning agency; (ii) municipalities, urban agriculture organizations or businesses to assist in the purchasing of private parcels; (iii) municipalities, urban farming businesses or nonprofit organizations to purchase or lease land, renovate land, build infrastructure or assist in farm, community garden and other agricultural enterprise startup costs; (iv) the purpose of establishing pilot programs in environmental justice populations to transition vacant lots into farms, community gardens and other agricultural enterprises; (v) the purpose of moving a city-

35 held tax land lien that was foreclosed to agricultural use; or (vi) the purpose of protecting a
36 parcel with a conservation easement.

37 (d) The department of agricultural resources shall provide outreach and application
38 materials for the grant program in multiple languages.

39 (e) The commissioner of agricultural resources shall promulgate rules and regulations for
40 the administration and implementation of this section.

41 (f) Annually, the commissioner of agricultural resources shall file a report with the house
42 and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on agriculture and fisheries and
43 the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate including, but not limited to: (i) a list of
44 grant applicants and the municipalities in which they are located; (ii) a list of grant recipients and
45 the municipalities in which they are located; (iii) the amount of funds requested by applicants;
46 (iv) the associated awarded grant amounts; and (v) the number of environmental justice
47 populations served by the awards made by the fund.