

HOUSE No. 5218

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, March 12, 2026.

The committee on Environment and Natural Resources, to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 988) of Kathleen R. LaNatra that the Department of Environmental Protection establish programs to promote ocean health and the responsible use of the ocean, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 5218) ought to pass.

For the committee,

CHRISTINE P. BARBER.

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

An Act relative to the blue economy.

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 21 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding, after section
2 67, the following section:-

3 Section 68. Subject to appropriation, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental
4 Protection shall establish a competitive grant program to provide funding to Massachusetts small
5 businesses for the transition to a circular economy. Circular economy is defined as an economy
6 that keeps material, products, and services in circulation for as long as possible. The department
7 shall promulgate regulations to support the creation of the program. The department shall be
8 authorized to accept applications from businesses that are incorporated in, are properly licensed
9 to do business in, or have a location in Massachusetts. All grants made under this program
10 should provide a measurable economic benefit to Massachusetts.

11 The department shall evaluate a list of criteria in awarding grant applications. The
12 department shall prioritize applications that fall under any of the following categories:
13 applications that are from (i) certified minority-owned and women-owned business enterprises;

14 (ii) businesses that are geographically located within an environmental justice population; and
15 (iii) businesses that provide substantial benefit to environmental justice populations, as long as
16 these applications meet all other necessary criteria. Environmental justice populations are
17 defined in section 56 of chapter 8. The department is authorized to use its discretion to decide
18 between applications of similar standing.

19 SECTION 2. Chapter 21A of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding, after
20 section 28, the following section:-

21 Section 29. Subject to appropriation, the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs
22 shall establish a grant program to provide funding to Massachusetts non-profits, academic
23 institutions, and businesses to conduct scientific research and the research and development of
24 new technology created for the purpose of improving ocean health and the responsible use of the
25 ocean. This funding may be used for scientific studies and other research, research and
26 development of new technology, investment into existing beneficial technology, expansion of
27 existing beneficial technology, or research into how the technology affects the Commonwealth,
28 the state economy, or particular industries. The department shall promulgate rules and
29 regulations to support the creation of a grant program. The department shall accept applications
30 from entities that are incorporated in, are properly licensed to do business in, or have a location
31 in Massachusetts. All grants made under this program should provide a measurable economic
32 benefit to the Massachusetts ocean economy.

33 In awarding grant funding, the Secretary shall prioritize projects with the most
34 measurable benefit to the ocean environment, marine species, or coastal communities; projects
35 using existing technology that is identified as the best available prototype in the field; projects

36 with outcomes that promote equity and inclusivity; projects that promote the use of time-series
37 data. Applications that satisfy one or more of these criteria shall be considered favorably in
38 priority of awards for funding, so long as those applications meet all other necessary criteria. The
39 Secretary is authorized to use her discretion to decide between applications of similar standing.

40 SECTION 3. Chapter 69 of the General Laws, is hereby amended by adding, after section
41 1T, the following section:-

42 Section 1U. Subject to appropriation, there shall be within the Massachusetts Department
43 of Elementary and Secondary Education a Blue Economy Education Fund to be used to provide
44 funding to the Commonwealth's high schools to expand educational development, workforce
45 training, and job placement programs in blue-STEAM industries. Blue-STEAM industries are
46 defined as ocean sector jobs in science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics.

47 The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall create an application
48 process for interested high schools to apply to the Blue Economy Education Fund. All funding
49 shall be prioritized to applications by high schools located within an environmental justice
50 community or composed of a substantial number of students from environmental justice
51 communities, as defined in section 62 of chapter 30 as amended by Chapter 8 of the Acts of
52 2021.