SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1015 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 53

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Joanne M. Comerford

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 resolve:

Resolve promoting equity in agriculture.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
Joanne M. Comerford	*Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester*	
Sal N. DiDomenico	*Middlesex and Suffolk*	*1/31/2025*
Hannah Kane	*11th Worcester*	*1/31/2025*
James B. Eldridge	*Middlesex and Worcester*	*2/11/2025*
Dylan A. Fernandes	*Plymouth and Barnstable*	*3/13/2025*

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By Ms. Comerford, a petition (accompanied by resolve, Senate, No. 53) of Joanne M. Comerford, Sal N. DiDomenico, Hannah Kane and James B. Eldridge that provisions be made for an investigation and study by a special commission (including members of the General Court) to promote equity in agriculture. Agriculture.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. *41* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

Resolve promoting equity in agriculture.

Resolved, (a) There shall be a special legislative commission to study and develop recommendations for supporting investments, policies and practices designed to promote equity in agriculture for socially disadvantaged groups in the commonwealth that have been historically or systematically excluded or have had less access to resources and opportunities based on cultural, racial or ethnic prejudice. These groups shall include, but shall not be limited to, African Americans, Cape Verdeans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Caribbean Islanders, Native Americans and Alaskan natives.

(b) The commission shall consist of the following members: the commissioner of agricultural resources, or a designee; the chairs of the joint committee on agriculture; 1 member appointed by the Massachusetts Black and Latino legislative caucus; 1 member appointed by the Massachusetts House Asian caucus; 2 members appointed by the Massachusetts food system

caucus, who shall be selected through an open nomination process pursuant to criteria developed by the caucus; 2 members appointed by the commissioner of agricultural resources who shall represent Buy Local organizations funded by the department of agricultural resources; 2 members appointed by the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative; 1 member appointed by the commission on the status of African Americans; 2 members appointed by a Massachusetts-based farming association; 2 members appointed by non-profit organizations whose primary purpose is working with farmers from socially disadvantaged groups; 1 member appointed by the commission on the status of Latinos and Latinas; 1 member appointed by the commission on the status of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; 1 member appointed by the commission on Indian affairs; 1 member appointed by Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation; 1 member appointed by the Massachusetts Federation of Farmers Markets; and 1 member appointed by the Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Members appointed to the commission shall, to the extent possible, represent a diversity of knowledge of urban and rural agricultural practices and experiences and be knowledgeable in agriculture. The commission shall be co-chaired by the commissioner of agricultural resources and a member of the commission chosen by the members.

(c) The commission shall investigate and study ways to promote equity in agriculture in the commonwealth, and shall prepare a report including, but not be limited to, recommendations related to: (i) data collection and dissemination; (ii) benchmark development and targeting areas of need; (iii) equitable access to grant programs and distribution of funds; (iv) generating greater equity in the legislative, regulatory and sub-regulatory processes to support agriculture in the commonwealth; (v) improving equity in programs and services offered by the department of agricultural resources, including, but not limited to, programs regarding land access and

protection, farmer technical assistance and education, marketing and other existing programs identified by the commission; and (vi) the implementation and monitoring of equity goals in agriculture in the commonwealth established by the commission. The department of agricultural resources shall furnish reasonable staff and other support for the work of the commission.

(d) The commission shall hold not less than 3 public hearings in various regions of the commonwealth; provided, that not less than 1 public hearing shall be held in a rural area and not less than 1 public hearing shall be held in an urban area with potential for increased urban agriculture.

(e) Not later than December 31, 2027, the commission shall file a report and any recommendations, including any legislation necessary to carry out the recommendations, with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on agriculture. The report shall be publicly available on the website of the department of agricultural resources.