

**SENATE . . . . . No.**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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PRESENTED BY:

***Joanne M. Comerford***

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*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.

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PETITION OF:

NAME:

*Joanne M. Comerford*

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

*Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester*

**SENATE . . . . . No.**

[Pin Slip]

[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.

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

8           (b) The commission shall consist of the following members: the commissioner of  
9       agricultural resources, or a designee; the chairs of the joint committee on agriculture; 1 member  
10      appointed by the Massachusetts Black and Latino legislative caucus; 1 member appointed by the  
11      Massachusetts House Asian caucus; 2 members appointed by the Massachusetts food system  
12      caucus, who shall be selected through an open nomination process pursuant to criteria developed

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

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

36 identified by the commission; and (vi) the implementation and monitoring of equity goals in  
37 agriculture in the commonwealth established by the commission. The department of agricultural  
38 resources shall furnish reasonable staff and other support for the work of the commission.

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

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