

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.121
Title:	An Act relative to urban farmland
Sponsor:	Representative Duffy of Holyoke
Cosponsors:	Representatives Sabadosa of Northampton, Domb of Amherst, Ultrino of Malden, Blais of Deerfield, Sena of Acton, Uytterhoeven of Somerville, Montaña of Boston, Elliott of Lowell, Arena-DeRosa of Holliston, González of Springfield, Higgins of Leominster, Zlotnik of Gardner, Madaro of Boston, Kassner of Hamilton, Moran of Boston, Connolly of Cambridge, Gentile of Sudbury, and Scarsdale of Pepperell; Senators Comerford and Eldridge
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 10:00 PM - 01:00 PM, B-1
Reporting Date:	Saturday, November 15th, 2025
Similar Matters:	S.61 (Senator Gomez – Identical)

Prior History

New file; No prior history

Current Law

Chapter 29 of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes the General Fund and many special funds.

Chapter 30 of the Massachusetts General Laws creates many rules and requirements which must be observed in Commonwealth departments and commissions. Section 62 of chapter 30 defines several terms for the purpose of environmental justice and environmentally responsible development, including the term “environmental justice population”

Summary

This bill establishes the Vacant Lots to Farms Grant Fund. It also defines vacant lots for use in the section. This fund will be administered by the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), and will be funded through general court appropriations, interest from the fund, and private gifts, donations and funds. Any money given to the fund will not revert to the General fund if unused, and any gifts or donations cannot be conveyed with a specified use.

The fund will be used to facilitate the establishment of agriculture on vacant lots. This includes farms, community gardens and other agricultural operations. The fund will specifically target environmental justice communities and cities. These agricultural operations must improve economic development, food security, and climate and heat resilience in urban areas. Grant applicants who support agricultural education, job training, food donation, and public engagement will be given priority.

Money from the fund will be granted to municipalities for land purchase or renovation, to organizations to create pilot programs, and to establish conservation easements.

A commissioner is required to create regulations to control the fund and create an annual report. This report would be filed with the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, the Joint Committee on Agriculture, and the House and Senate clerks. The report will include the list of applicants and their municipalities, the amount of funds requested, and the total received, and the environmental justice populations which are affected.