

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.108
Title:	An Act to protect Massachusetts pollinators
Sponsors:	Representative Arena-DeRosa of Holliston
Cosponsors:	None
Hearing Date:	Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM - 05:00 PM, A-1
Reporting Date:	Sunday, September 7, 2025
Similar Matters:	H.1041 (Representative Sabadosa - Similar) S.587 (Senator Eldridge - Similar)

Prior History

New file; No prior history

Current Law

Chapter 132B of the Massachusetts General Laws describes and implements the Massachusetts Pesticide Control Act. Section 2 of chapter 132B contains the definitions of important or otherwise ambiguous terms used elsewhere in this chapter. Section 6 of chapter 132B prohibits the distribution of certain pesticides, as a result of public health concern, labeling issue, lack of certification, or other issue at the discretion of the Department of Food and Agriculture (now named the Department of Agricultural Resources, or MDAR). Section 10 of chapter 132B describes the process for the MDAR to certify and license individuals to use pesticides and categorizes applicators as either a certified commercial applicator, certified private applicator, permitted catch basin applicator or licensed applicator. It specifies criteria for application and evaluation by MDAR including a knowledge of integrated pest management, as well as penalties for violating the terms of a license. Section 14 of chapter 132B describes violations and the penalties for violations of the provisions of this chapter.

Summary

This bill amends section 2 of chapter 132B by inserting a definition for neonicotinoid pesticides.

This bill amends section 6 of chapter 132B to prevent neonicotinoids from being used except by professionals certified by the pesticide board. This restriction would not apply to personal or pet use for the purposes of flea, lice, and insect repellent on the body of a person or animal. In cases where a certified commercial applicator uses neonicotinoids, the property owner would be required to consent to this usage and acknowledge the health and environmental hazards of these pesticides.

This bill amends section 10 of chapter 132B by inserting an additional requirement into the certification process for prospective applicators. Applicants would have to demonstrate knowledge on the protection of pollinators from pesticide application in their examination in addition to integrated pest management.

This bill amends section 14 of chapter 132B by including the sections added by this bill to those which are enforceable by punitive measures under section 14 of chapter 132B.

This bill directs the department of transportation to identify opportunities to replace non-native plants and grass around their solar energy installations with native plant species to attract pollinators.

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.110
Title:	An Act relative to lobstering closure mitigation
Sponsors:	Representative Armini of Marblehead
Cosponsors:	Representative LaNatra of Kingston
Hearing Date:	Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM - 05:00 PM, A-1
Reporting Date:	Sunday, September 7, 2025
Similar Matters:	S.68 (Senator O'Connor - Identical)

Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as S.552; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft S.2534; Reported favorably to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

Current Law

Chapter 130 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to marine fish, fisheries, fishing, and the division of marine fisheries.

Summary

This bill would create the Lobstering Closure and Mitigation special fund administered by the Department of Unemployment Assistance. This fund would make payments to lobstermen who are prevented from work due to closures of their fishing areas which protect marine species, such as the Right whale. This fund is meant to be a temporary stopgap while lobstermen work towards incorporation, which would allow them to apply for unemployment payments from the state. Payments from the special fund would only be awarded to lobstermen who are incorporated or working toward incorporation. Payments for lobstermen would be eligible for weekly payments equal to one dollar per lobster trap per week. Payments would stop after one calendar year to those who did not make progress towards incorporation in that time frame. The fund would be dissolved three fiscal years after its creation.

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.114
Title:	An Act to promote economic opportunities for cottage food entrepreneurs
Sponsors:	Representative Boldyga of Southwick
Cosponsors:	None
Hearing Date:	Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM - 05:00 PM, A-1
Reporting Date:	Sunday, September 7, 2025
Similar Matters:	H.140 (Representative Uyterhoeven - Similar) S.69 (Senator Oliveira - Similar)

Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as H.758; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment & Natural Resources; Discharged to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft S.2761; Reported favorably the the Senate Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

Current Law

Chapter 94 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to the inspection and sale of food, drugs, and various articles. Section 1 of chapter 94r defines the terms used in this chapter. Section 146 of chapter 94 governs the powers of food inspection which are delegated by the Commonwealth to local boards of health. These powers include the authority to inspect meat, fish, and produce which are created or sold within their region of authority, fees to be charged for inspections, and the seizure and destruction of materials which are infected with a contagious disease or otherwise do not meet health standards. This section also gives local boards of health the authority to create their own rules and regulations for the purpose of ensuring the health and safety of food products under their purview, subject to a public hearing process. It also exempts certain articles of food from local boards of health control if they are sold within Boston's market limits at certain times and with certain other limitations.

Summary

This bill prevents local boards of health from regulating cottage food operations. This type of operation is defined in the bill as one where an individual prepares food in their domestic kitchen for direct-to-consumer sale. It also defines a cottage food product as the item which is sold in this arrangement.

This bill also exempts cottage food operations from any permitting or licensing process at the local or state level, though they are not exempt from tax laws. The Department of Public Health will still be empowered to investigate foodborne illnesses which are believed to be associated with a cottage food operation.

The cottage food operation would have to include information to the consumer, including the operation's name, address, the food product's name, all ingredients used, and the statement: "This product was produced at a private residence that is exempt from Massachusetts licensing and inspection requirements. This product may contain allergens". These requirements must be conveyed to the consumer even if these products are sold online or by phone.

This bill would also require the Department of Public Health to establish a voluntary list for cottage food operations. If an operation chooses to be added to this list, they can receive an identification number from the Department to use in place of their address. An application to be added to this list would be required to include the operator's full name, address, phone number, and email address.

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.117
Title:	An Act relative to hemp and hemp products in the Commonwealth
Sponsor:	Representative Cusack of Braintree
Cosponsors:	None
Hearing Date:	Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM - 05:00 PM, A-1
Reporting Date:	Sunday, September 7, 2025
Similar Matters:	H.143 (Representative Arena-DeRosa - Similar) S.54 (Senator Comerford - Similar)

Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as H.90; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft S.2579; Reported favorably to the Senate Committee on Ways & Means where no further action was taken.

2021-2022: Filed as H.146; Referred to the Joint Committee on Cannabis Policy; Accompanied a new draft H.4507; Reported favorably to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing; Recommended ought to pass; Referred to the House Committee on Ways & Means where no further action was taken.

Current Law

Chapter 94G of the Massachusetts General Laws concerns the sale of marijuana and marijuana products, and the licensing of different types of marijuana establishments, and establishes the Cannabis Control Commission. Section 1 of chapter 94G contains definitions for marijuana related terms and other terms that are otherwise uncommon or ambiguous, and which are used throughout the rest of this chapter. Hemp is defined in this section as a cannabis plant, or a part of the plant, which contains THC in low amounts, below a threshold of .3% on a dry weight basis. This definition matches current federal law. The chapter itself concerns the growing and sale of marijuana, marijuana products and other associated products through licensed growers and retailers under the regulating authority of the Cannabis Control Commission.

Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to agriculture.

Section 116 of chapter 128 contains definitions for hemp related terms and other terms that are otherwise uncommon or ambiguous, and which are used throughout sections 117 to 123 of this chapter. Hemp is defined as a cannabis plant which contains THC in low amounts, below a threshold of .3% on

a dry weight basis. Industrial hemp is defined as hemp which is used only for industrial purposes, such as making rope or cloth.

Section 117 of chapter 128 regulates industrial hemp. In this section, The planting, growing, harvesting, possessing, processing, selling and research of hemp and industrial hemp is placed under the control of the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR). Anyone involved in these activities with industrial hemp must be licensed by MDAR and can only acquire hemp seeds from a distributor approved by the department. Industrial hemp is also only allowed to be used for research purposes, or commercial purposes that the Commissioner of MDAR deems reasonable.

Section 118 of chapter 128 regulates activities related to hemp. Anyone planting, growing, harvesting, possessing, processing, or selling hemp must register with the department, including anyone distributing hemp seed or using hemp for commercial purposes. The only activity specified which does not require a license is agricultural research. For this purpose, a person only has to register with MDAR. Licensees must apply to MDAR with their name and address, acreage of their field, GPS data, an application fee, consent for MDAR to inspect the premises, and other information deemed necessary. Except for the address and GPS data, all this information is considered public record.

Section 119 of chapter 128 details the review process for licenses. The Commissioner of MDAR shall approve a license application if all requirements are met and the license would be in the best interest of the Commonwealth and shall deny a license application if it is incomplete or for another good cause.

Section 120 of chapter 128 allows the Commissioner of MDAR to suspend or revoke the license of a person who violates the provisions of sections 116 to 123 of this chapter.

Section 121 of chapter 128 allows the Commissioner of MDAR and the department to make rules and regulations to enforce sections 116 to 123 of this chapter, including emergency regulations.

Section 122 of chapter 128 allows MDAR to test and inspect equipment, supplies and property of a licensee or registered researcher. This includes the testing of hemp and industrial hemp for delta-9 THC concentration levels.

Section 123 of chapter 128 allows MDAR to assess fines for violations of sections 116 to 123 of this chapter and allows for an appeals process.

Summary

This bill amends section 1 of chapter 94G by inserting definitions for Cannabidiol or CBD. It also changes the definition of hemp in this section, tying the acceptable THC concentration percentage to federal law instead of setting it at .3% by dry weight. It also considers all extracts and derivatives of hemp plants as hemp, not just the plant itself. It also explicitly states that hemp and its derivatives are an agricultural commodity.

This bill amends section 116 of chapter 128 by inserting definitions for Cannabidiol or CBD and Hemp. These definitions are identical to the definitions that are added or amended in section 1 of chapter 94G. It also adds a definition for Hemp Products. These are defined as all products derived or processed from hemp plants which are made for consumer sale. This includes products intended for topical application for humans or animals, products meant for human or animal consumption, and products meant for industrial purposes like cordage or fuel. It defines Industrial Hemp identically to Hemp. It also defines Tetrahydrocannabinol or THC as identical to federal law.

This bill amends section 117 of chapter 128 by removing “selling” industrial hemp as an activity which requires a license from MDAR. It also removes the requirement for industrial hemp to only be used for certain purposes. It also moves license application requirements from section 118 of the chapter into this section.

This bill amends section 118 of chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws by striking it in its entirety and inserting in its place the current contents of section 119 of this chapter, relating to license approval or denial by the Commissioner. The only change between section 118 as amended by this bill and the current section 119 in the General Laws is the removal of the stipulation that the license is in the best interest of the Commonwealth, and a renumbering of sections cited in language.

This bill amends section 119 of chapter 128 by striking it in its entirety and inserting in its place the current contents of section 120 of this chapter, relating to suspension or revocation of licenses.

This bill amends section 120 of chapter 128 by striking it in its entirety and inserting in its place the current contents of section 121 of this chapter, relating to MDAR’s authority to create rules and regulations to implement sections 116 to 123 of this chapter.

This bill amends section 121 of chapter 128 by striking it in its entirety and inserting in its place the current contents of section 122 of this chapter, relating to MDAR’s ability to inspect hemp operations and test samples.

This bill amends section 122 of chapter 128 by striking it in its entirety and inserting new language which allows the sale of edible products which contain hemp. It would not allow for these products to be considered adulterated or misbranded solely as a result of them including hemp or hemp derivatives. It would not allow any of these products to advertise an ability to treat or cure diseases unless that statement is approved federally. It would also allow hemp cultivated in other states or tribal territory to be sold in Massachusetts, as long as it was cultivated in accordance with a USDA approved program from that area.

This bill also allows hemp derivatives to be included as ingredients in topical products meant for human or animal application. Any THC found in any of these edible or topical products would not be considered a controlled substance as long as it tests within federally defined limits.

This bill amends section 123 of chapter 128 by renumbering a section cited in the language which would be moved by this bill.

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Bill Summary

Bill Number: H.122

Title: An Act relative to the preservation of existing pet cemeteries

Sponsors: Representative Elliott of Lowell

Cosponsors: Representative Arciero of Westford

Hearing Date: Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM - 05:00 PM, A-1

Reporting Date: Sunday, September 7, 2025

Similar Matters: None

Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as H.4206; Referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied study order H.4522.

Current Law

Chapter 129 of the Massachusetts General Laws concerns livestock disease control.

Summary

This bill defines domestic pets and pet cemeteries, two terms which are currently undefined in the General Laws. The bill requires that any property owner who is using or plans to use a property as a pet cemetery file with the applicable register of deeds. This filing will include a dedication which restricts the property to remain a pet cemetery, forbidding it from being remanded to another purpose.

The owners of these pet cemeteries will be required to keep records of all pets buried on the property as well as their location. This bill would include all properties that meet the definition of pet cemetery, including those which were used for this purpose before the bill would go into effect.

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.124
Title:	An Act relative to improving pesticide protections for Massachusetts schoolchildren
Sponsors:	Representative Gentile of Sudbury
Cosponsors:	Representatives Keefe of Worcester, Ashe of Longmeadow, Garry of Dracut, and Hawkins of Attleboro; Senator Eldridge
Hearing Date:	Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM - 05:00 PM, A-1
Reporting Date:	Sunday, September 7, 2025
Similar Matters:	S.64 (Senator Eldridge - Identical)

Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as H.811; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Steering, Policy and Scheduling; Ordered to a third reading where no further action was taken.

2021-2022: Filed as H.926; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Steering, Policy and Scheduling where no further action was taken.

2019-2020: Filed as H.791; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Steering, Policy and Scheduling where no further action was taken.

Current Law

Chapter 132B of the Massachusetts General Laws describes and implements the Massachusetts Pesticide Control Act. Section 6C of chapter 132B regulates pesticide use in schools and child care programs, limiting when pesticides can be applied and requiring that pupils and guardians are notified in most circumstances. Section 6G of chapter 132B limits the types of pesticides that can be used in schools and child care programs, specifying that all pesticides used must be part of the facility's integrated pest management plan, must not be identified as a known, likely or probable carcinogen, cannot have ingredients which are identified as Inerts of Toxicological Concern by the EPA, and must not be used for purely aesthetic purposes.

Summary

This bill increases the amount of land which is required to follow the limits on pesticide application in Section 6C of chapter 132B of the Massachusetts General Laws to also include juvenile court facilities, department of youth services facilities, and fields used by youth sports teams. It also requires all properties within 150 feet of the facilities listed in section 6C to also comply with these restrictions. It also clarifies that any entity which applies pesticides in areas covered by this section must comply with its restrictions, regardless of whether they own the property, manage it or are hired to apply pesticides.

This bill also requires that schools and child care programs may only apply pesticides which are classified by the EPA as exempt material and which only contain ingredients included in the USDA list of synthetic substances allowed for use in organic crop production. Substances other than those which meet these requirements can only be applied if the location is granted a hardship waiver by the Department of Food and Agriculture (now the Department of Agricultural Resources - MDAR).

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Bill Summary

Bill Number: H.128

Title: An Act relative to establishing a food justice frontline

Sponsor: Representative Howard of Lowell

Cosponsors: Resentative Arena-DeRosa of Holliston; Senator Eldridge

Hearing Date: Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM - 05:00 PM, A-1

Reporting Date: Sunday, September 7, 2025

Similar Matters: S.63 (Senator Jehlen - Identical)

Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as H.828; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment & Natural Resources; Discharged to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft H.4226; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

2022-2023: Filed as H.973; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Reported favorably to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

Current Law

Chapter 128 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to agriculture.

Summary

This bill defines the terms “food security job,” “nonprofit food security organization,” and “overburdened community.” This bill directs the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to create a Food Justice Frontline Program. This program would fund nonprofit food security organizations to enable them to create new food security jobs and provide those jobs to individuals living within overburdened communities. MDAR would be charged with creating an application with which nonprofit food security organizations may apply to receive a financial grant, not to exceed \$500,000. MDAR will establish rules and regulations regarding the process and criteria for the grant application. The regulations must prioritize organizations that are planning to create food security jobs for those in overburdened communities.

The applicant must describe in detail the program(s) the nonprofit food security organization operates that provide land or food security jobs to low-income Massachusetts residents and the ways in which the organization would use the funding to create jobs for individuals living in overburdened communities. The organization must apply for multiple grants under this program. The organization that receives this grant must use the entirety of the money on programs that will create food security jobs for those in overburdened communities. The jobs must meet a certain criterion for the hourly wage.

The bill requires the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (HED) to establish a program to promote food security programs such as SNAP, HIP, and similar food programs. This program would work with residents under 18 and pay them \$15/hour to promote public awareness of these programs. The program would be conducted in multiple languages. The departments must prioritize working with Massachusetts residents who live in overburdened communities or Census Block Groups with a median household income that is below 80% of the statewide median household income. This program must be conducted in multiple languages. DTA and HED must apply for federal programs such as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grants administered by the USDA to provide matching benefits to be deposited in the fund.

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Bill Summary

Bill Number: H.132
Title: An Act relative to food justice with jobs
Sponsors: Representative Madaro of Boston
Cosponsors: None
Hearing Date: Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM - 05:00 PM, A-1
Reporting Date: Sunday, September 7, 2025
Similar Matters: None

Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as H.855; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment & Natural Resources; Discharged to Joint Committee on Agriculture; Reported favorably to the House Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

2021-2022: Filed as H.967; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft S.2880; Reported favorably to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

Current Law

None

Summary

This bill establishes the Local Garden Agriculture Program. This is a program which would be created by an Agriculture Jobs Division, though this division does not exist under current law and is not established by this bill. This program would allow individuals in Massachusetts to apply for grants to undertake small-scale garden agriculture. Grants would target material such as trowels, spades, soil, mulch, seeds, gloves and soil. Raised garden beds with a pest-control cage would also be available to request on grant applications. Applications would require an applicant's name, address, and household income, with households of lower income prioritized for approval. Applications would be available in all languages spoken by at least 10% of Massachusetts residents. Assistance in setting up a garden bed or pest control cage would be furnished by the Division for an accepted application.

All approved applicants would be prohibited from using chemical pesticides, chemical herbicides, and chemical fertilizers with their grant materials.

The Division would be required to hire a technical assistant to answer questions from grant recipients.

This bill also establishes the Community Agriculture Program. This program is again created by the Agricultural Jobs Division. This program would furnish grants to agricultural cooperatives to buy land for community gardens, compensate real estate agents for assistance in procuring such land, to construct or install structures for the purpose of community agriculture, to purchase of tools and materials for agriculture, to retain legal assistance for the cooperative, fund financial accounting for the cooperative, and to compensate cooperative members for agricultural work. All members of the surrounding area, as defined by the cooperative in their application, would be considered members of the cooperative.

This chapter requires agricultural cooperatives to secure the approval of the Commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources before they sell or transfer any land they own, regardless of whether this cooperative participates in the Community Agriculture Program. It would require agricultural cooperatives to elect a board of directors and adopt bylaws.

Community Agriculture Grants would be limited in amount based on the size of the cooperative which applies for the grant. For cooperatives of 500 people or less, grants are limited in size to \$500,000. For cooperatives of 750 people or less, grants are limited in size to \$700,000. For cooperatives of 1000 people or less, grants are limited to \$1,000,000.

Applications will be prioritized by the Division in areas which have lower than average household income according to the federal census. Applications will not be accepted from any cooperative which operates in any area which has an income of 90 percent of the statewide median as defined by the federal census.

The Division of Agricultural Jobs will be required to establish standards for cooperatives which minimize the use of chemical fertilizers, chemical pesticides, chemical herbicides, tilling, and polyculture.

The Division would be required to hire technical assistants with knowledge on organic or non-chemical farming and indoor farming.

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.140
Title:	An Act to promote economic opportunities for cottage food entrepreneurs
Sponsor:	Representative Uyterhoeven of Somerville
Cosponsors:	Senator Oliveira
Hearing Date:	Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM - 05:00 PM, A-1
Reporting Date:	Sunday, September 7, 2025
Similar Matters:	H.114 (Representative Boldyga - Similar) S.69 (Senator Oliveira - Identical)

Prior History

2023-2024: Filed as H.758; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment & Natural Resources; Discharged to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a new draft S.2761; Reported favorably to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means where no further action was taken.

2021-2022: Filed as H.862; Assigned to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied study order H.5236.

Current Law

Chapter 94 of the Massachusetts General Laws relates to the inspection and sale of food, drugs, and various articles. Section 1 of chapter 94 defines the terms used in this chapter.

Summary

This bill inserts the definitions for “cottage food operation” and “cottage food product.” The bill requires the Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish rules for cottage food operations and the sale of cottage foods and that those rules are enforced by local boards of health. DPH must regulate categories of cottage food products that may be sold without requiring a permit from a local board of health. For cottage food products that require a permit, and if the local board of health requires a pre-operational inspection, the inspection must occur within 30 days of a person’s application for a permit. The bill allows DPH to issue cottage food permits if the local board of health does not issue such permits. This bill requires that cottage food operations be exempt from permitting, licensing, inspection, packaging, and labeling requirements for food establishments set by state law, the department of public health, and local boards of health. The bill will not exempt cottage food businesses from state or federal tax laws.

Cottage food operations must provide the following pieces of information on their labels, sign/placard at their point of sale, and or website: cottage food operations name, address or personal identification number (PIN), name of product, ingredients in descending order, and the following statement “This product was produced at a private residence that is exempt from Massachusetts licensing and inspection requirements. This product may contain allergens.”

The bill requires DPH to establish and maintain a voluntary cottage food operation registry. DPH may grant a cottage food operation with a PIN rather than sharing their address. PIN numbers will be issued to operations who have submitted their applications and paid the registration fee, the fee may not exceed \$25.

The cottage food operation will supply DPH with the following information for their records: the cottage food operator’s full name, address, primary telephone number, and primary email address. The cottage food operation will update the department if any of the aforementioned information changes. DPH will not require cottage food operations to register for a PIN. This bill will not impede DPH or local boards of health from investigating food borne illnesses.

Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

Bill Summary

Bill Number:	H.3981
Title:	An Act relative to establishing a pilot program to support high impact fisheries
Sponsor:	Representative Diggs of Barnstable
Cosponsors:	None
Hearing Date:	Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM - 05:00 PM, A-1
Reporting Date:	Sunday, September 7, 2025
Similar Matters:	None

Prior History

New file; No prior history

Current Law

Chapter 21A of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and its internal structure. It establishes the power and duties of the office and its secretary, including ocean and river management, as well as the types of rules, regulations and laws it is responsible for enforcing.

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

Summary

This bill creates a pilot program within the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) which would work to reduce the impact of regulations on the economic success of “high-impact fisheries”. This term includes lobster and groundfish. EEA would collaborate with the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) to identify industries which are most affected by regulatory changes in the past 5 years, quantify how much these industries were negatively affected as a result of these regulation changes, partner with private organizations, academic institutions and federal agencies to conduct research, and develop a system to compensate fishers who work in high-impact fisheries.

This bill also requires that any proposed regulation which would affect the fishing industry include an economic impact statement from DMF featuring projected losses in the industry from the proposed regulation, and a mitigation plan for the industry. These statements would be publicly posted on DMF’s website and would accept public comments for a 60-day period.

EEA would be required to report annually on findings from this pilot program and any identified issues or implemented mitigation strategies, any recommendations for changes to regulations, and any partnerships established or funding secured for purposes in this section. This report would be sent to the Chairs of the Joint Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources and the clerks of the House and Senate.

This bill creates the High- Impact Fisheries Mitigation Fund. This fund is administered by the Secretary of EEA. The fund would receive money from appropriations from the General Fund, interest from the fund, federal grants and other gifts or donations. Unused money in the fund will not revert to the General Fund unless this section is repealed and the Mitigation fund is dissolved.

This fund will be used to carry out the purposes of the pilot program established in this bill.

EEA will report on the fund annually to the Chairs of the Joint Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources, the House and Senate Committee on Ways and Means, and the clerks of the House and Senate.

Both the pilot program and the Mitigation fund will expire five years after they take effect. These sections are specified as taking effect January 1, 2025.