

MassSenate
RESPONSE
2025

March 31, 2026

Dear Honorable Colleagues:

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Steering and Policy, I respectfully urge your support of **S.3029, *An Act fostering agricultural resilience in Massachusetts***, which is slated to come before the Senate for debate tomorrow. Components of this bill have been identified as **Response 2025** priorities by the committee, as residents of the Commonwealth face heightened food insecurity due to recent federal policy decisions, such as reducing funding for supplemental nutrition and food access, as well as economic factors influenced by federal actions, such as tariffs, that have also contributed to the rising cost of food in Massachusetts. Farmers and local food producers have also been negatively impacted by significant cuts to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant programs and staffing levels.

Provisions of this bill that help our Commonwealth respond to challenges resulting from federal government actions include:

- Requiring the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to develop and maintain a plan for supporting agricultural, seafood, and processed food production in the Commonwealth in emergency preparedness planning efforts. This comes in direct response to federal cuts to the federal equivalent of MEMA — FEMA — and to address weaknesses in food supply chains not addressed since being exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Codifying the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), which serves as an additional source of funds for low-income recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to allow for fresh food grown in Massachusetts to go from farm-to-table, as well as an important income stream for local farmers. SNAP funding for Massachusetts has been reduced through decreased eligibility and administrative hurdles for residents in need, as has funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) program, which provides food to food banks. Lower-income Massachusetts families face significant new challenges in accessing food as a result of these changes in funding.
- Codifying the Food Security Infrastructure Grant program, which helps support equitable access to local foods. This is especially important given the cuts to FEMA as well as reductions in SNAP benefits and access for lower-income Massachusetts residents. It also helps generate economic benefits for local food producers and farmers.
- Codifying the Farm-to-School grant program to strengthen the Commonwealth's food and agriculture economy, improve student health and nutrition, and build food literacy among students. In March 2025, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) terminated \$600 million in grant funding for the

second round of the Local Food for Schools and Child Care grant program. The Commonwealth was due to receive \$12.1 million; \$9,103,303 of which would have supported this program in K-12 education.

- Requiring the state purchaser, state agencies, and the four regional food banks to annually report on the distribution of local food through state food assistance programs and make recommendations for increasing the percentage year-over-year. SNAP and USDA cuts will lead to a reduced amount of food purchased in the Commonwealth, which will hurt local farmers and food producers. The Commonwealth was projected to receive about \$14 million in 2025 from the now-terminated USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program, which bought food from historically underserved Massachusetts farmers to provide to underserved communities. This annual report will ensure that Massachusetts is able to better support our local economy by ensuring that an increasing amount of state food assistance dollars support those who produce and farm food here.

The Senate Committee on Steering and Policy, in accordance with the Response 2025 initiative, will continue to identify and recommend support of policies that protect our residents, defend the Commonwealth's values, and lead Massachusetts through these difficult times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia F. Friedman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Senator Cindy F. Friedman
Chair, Senate Committee on Steering and Policy