



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
THE GENERAL COURT
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

March 18, 2019

Chair Michael Rodrigues
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Rodrigues:

We write to respectfully urge the Senate Committee on Ways and Means to include \$8.5 million in funding for the Healthy Incentives Program in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget.

Since its inception in April 2017, the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) has provided vulnerable families and individuals across the Commonwealth with vital access to otherwise unaffordable fresh, healthy and local fruits and vegetables and spurred significant increases in sales for local farms across Massachusetts. To date, HIP has yielded \$8.3 million in sales of fresh fruits and vegetables for over 200 farms in Massachusetts, providing 54,000 families in our Commonwealth with HIP incentives.

HIP demonstrates the exceptional results that occur when state agencies work together toward a common goal that connects their missions. The Department of Transitional Assistance, in their role as lead agency for HIP, is providing more and healthier foods for SNAP households. The Department of Agricultural Resources has helped farmers sustain their operations through increased sales. And the Department of Public Health has helped vulnerable communities move toward better health outcomes by healthier eating. Thanks to this collaborative effort, HIP is far exceeding expectations, demonstrating the need for continuation of this program, which both families and farmers have already come to depend on.

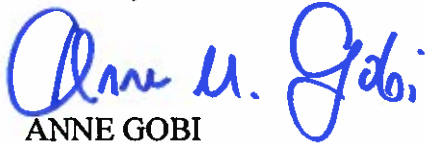
HIP is not without challenges – most notably deficient funding levels which have necessitated multiple month suspensions in FY18 and FY19 and closed the program to many farmers, families and individuals who want to participate. The ability to ensure consistent, uninterrupted operation of the program is essential to the success of HIP, as suspensions have limited farmers' ability to plan and sustain meaningful business as well as the program's ability to maximize effectiveness in changing consumers eating habits, and left vulnerable program clients without a precious resource.

Given the strong public health benefit and increased economic opportunity for local farmers, we respectfully request HIP be funded at \$8.5 million in FY20 to allow for year-round operation of the program. The provision of \$8.5 million would also support moderate continued growth, as the program is estimating 15% growth in participation. Lastly, this funding allocation would result in accommodation of additional points of sale. For the first time since late 2017, this funding would provide DTA with the means to open up HIP vendor participation to a few new farms in geographic locations currently underserved by HIP.

HIP has been the source of better health outcomes and increased food security for vulnerable families and a champion of our local farmers and economy. The value of HIP is evident and has resonated across every part of the Commonwealth. To that end, we urge the Senate Committee on Ways and Means to build upon the success of this program and respectfully request \$8.5 million in FY20 funding for the Healthy Incentives Program.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



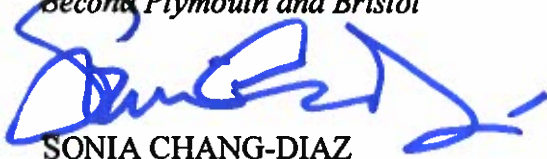
ANNE GOBI
Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire and Middlesex



ERIC LESSER
First Hampden and Hampshire



MICHAEL BRADY
Second Plymouth and Bristol



SONIA CHANG-DIAZ
Second Suffolk



JULIAN CYR
Cape and Islands



JAMES ELDRIDGE
Middlesex and Worcester



PAUL FEENEY
Bristol and Norfolk



JO COMERFORD
Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester



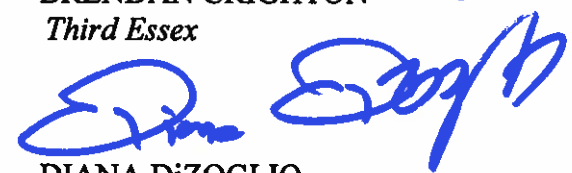
MICHAEL BARRETT
Third Middlesex



HARRIETTE CHANDLER
First Worcester



BRENDAN CRIGHTON
Third Essex



DIANA DiZOGLIO
First Essex



RYAN FATTMAN
Worcester and Norfolk



ADAM HINDS
Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden

Patricia Jehlen

PATRICIA JEHLLEN
Second Middlesex

Edward Kennedy

EDWARD KENNEDY
First Middlesex

Joan B. Lovely

JOAN LOVELY
Second Essex

Mark C. Montigny

MARK MONTIGNY
Second Bristol and Plymouth

Michael Moore

MICHAEL MOORE
Second Worcester

Pat O'Connor

PATRICK O'CONNOR
Plymouth and Norfolk

Water Timilty

WATER TIMILTY
Norfolk, Bristol and Plymouth

Dean A. Tran

DEAN TRAN
Worcester and Middlesex

James Welch

JAMES WELCH
Hampden