



Six Beacon Street, Suite 1025, Boston, MA 02108  
617-523-8448 [mcusher@massaudubon.org](mailto:mcusher@massaudubon.org)

June 3, 2019

The Honorable Jason Lewis  
Joint Committee on Education  
State House, Room 511B  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Alice Peicsh  
Joint Committee on Education  
State House, Room 473G  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Lewis and Chair Peisch,

Mass Audubon thanks the Joint Committee on Education for the opportunity to express our strong support for **S.301/H.556 *An Act establishing farm to school grants to promote healthy eating and strengthen the agricultural economy*** (Senator Lessor and Representative Pignatelli). We urge you to support this legislation, which will create a competitive grant program to providing funding for schools to engage with local farms.

Establishing a competitive grant program within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide eligible schools funding that they need to start or expand upon existing relationships with farms is a win/win opportunity for the state. Assisting schools in collaborating with farms to serve local food in their school meals, provide nutrition education, and partake in garden-based learning opportunities benefits the students, teachers, and farmers.

Countless studies have shown that students who partake in farm to school programs will both learn lifelong, healthy eating habits, and see an overall increase in academic achievement. The emerging practice of garden-based learning, one of the main tenants of farm to school education, supports not only effective application of core subject areas but also critical social and emotional wellbeing.

Mass Audubon has seen the positive effects farm to school programing can have through our own Drumlin Farm, which collaborates with three different school districts: Somerville, Cambridge, and Waltham, to provide healthy vegetables for school lunches. Drumlin Farm provides these school districts with educational programing to help connect teachers, cafeteria staff, and students to the food that they are eating. Additionally, they offer daily afterschool programing in Somerville to teach students about healthy eating and where our food comes from.

Mass Audubon requests the Committee report favorably on **S.301/H.556** so that Massachusetts students will have greater access to healthy foods and nutrition education.

Mike Cusher  
Legislative Director