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August 8, 2018

Attn: Ron Cobb  
Boston City Council  
City Hall, Fifth Floor  
Boston, MA 02201

Via Email: [Ron.Cobb@Boston.gov](mailto:Ron.Cobb@Boston.gov)

RE: Docket #1096, Committee on Environment, Sustainability, and Parks Hearing – Letter of Support

Dear Mr. Cobb and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Mass Audubon, I submit the following testimony in support of the proposed local wetlands ordinance sponsored by City Councilor At-Large Michelle Wu. Mass Audubon is a leading member of the Massachusetts Climate Change Adaptation Coalition and supports initiatives at all levels of government to address the impacts of climate change. This ordinance is consistent with local planning including the Climate Ready Boston resiliency initiative. It would assist Boston in reducing vulnerabilities of people, property, and natural systems to the impacts of climate change including sea level rise, increased storm intensities, and flooding.

Mass Audubon supports municipal adoption of local wetlands protection ordinances and regulations. We commend the City of Boston in taking this step to address this overdue need. Nearly 200 municipalities statewide already have local wetlands ordinances/bylaws that provide scientifically-based supplements to the state Wetlands Protection Act, and Boston is one of only three coastal communities that has not yet adopted this local control option. As is noted in this proposed ordinance, wetlands, floodplains, riparian areas, and vegetated buffers provide numerous benefits to the local community, including protecting water quality and preventing pollution, erosion and sedimentation control, coastal and inland flood control and storm damage prevention, scenic and recreational values, and wildlife habitat, among others.

Climate change is not only a serious concern for the future, it is already impacting Massachusetts communities today. This is well documented in rising sea levels, a 15% increase in overall precipitation and a 55% increase in precipitation from strong storms in recent decades, as well as an increase in temperature and the frequency and intensity of droughts. These impacts are

increasingly costly, putting property, infrastructure, and people at risk. The Climate Ready Boston analyses and plans illustrate the many locations that are at risk in Boston, and the important roles that wetlands and other nature-based solutions such as Green Infrastructure features can play in reducing these vulnerabilities and costs. The proposed ordinance explicitly recognizes the critical role of wetlands in climate change, and enables the conservation commission to consider a project's climate resilience or impacts.

By adopting this ordinance, Boston will be taking a leading role in ensuring that development and redevelopment is designed to withstand the impacts of climate change and avoid increasing those impacts on nearby properties. We support Boston's efforts to lead the way for other communities throughout the Commonwealth to adopt local rules to create a safer, healthier, and more resilient future for its residents, businesses, and visitors.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,



E. Heidi Ricci  
Assistant Director of Advocacy

cc: Boston City Council Committee on Environment, Sustainability and Parks,  
[ccc.es@Boston.gov](mailto:ccc.es@Boston.gov)  
David Morgan, Policy Fellow, Office of Councilor Michelle Wu,  
[david.morgan@boston.gov](mailto:david.morgan@boston.gov)

*Mass Audubon protects 38,000 acres of land throughout Massachusetts, saving birds and other wildlife, and making nature accessible to all. As Massachusetts' largest nature conservation nonprofit, we welcome more than a half million visitors a year to our wildlife sanctuaries and nature centers. Today, Mass Audubon is a nationally recognized environmental education leader, offering thousands of camp, school, and adult programs. With more than 125,000 members and supporters, we advocate on Beacon Hill and beyond, and conduct conservation research to preserve the natural heritage of our beautiful state. We welcome you to explore a nearby sanctuary, find inspiration, and get involved. Learn how at [massaudubon.org](http://massaudubon.org).*