



**Farm to School Grant Program**  
**[Massachusetts Food for Massachusetts Kids](#)**

**TIP SHEET** for testifying in support of the Farm to School Grant Bill ([S.349](#) and [H.686](#)) at the **Joint Education Committee Public Hearing on January 4, 2022**

**Our Request:** *Please support H.686 and S.349, "An Act establishing farm to school grants to promote healthy eating and strengthen the agricultural economy".*

**Background:** State Representative Pignatelli and Senator Lesser filed H.686 and S.349, respectively, in March 2021 to establish a farm to school grant program within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The bill has been referred to the Joint Committee on Education, and there was a [policy briefing](#) for the Legislature on October 19th to help legislators and their staff [understand the bill](#). Earlier this month, Senator Lesser, along with the support of the Legislature, was successful in getting \$1M in funding included in the COVID appropriations bill to fund the first year of this program with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The appropriated funds will be used to implement the first year of the program, but does not establish permanent statute for a Farm to School Grant Program here in Massachusetts.

The Joint Committee on Education has scheduled a public hearing on **January 4** to solicit public comment on the Farm to School Grant Bill as well as on the Universal School Meals bill, which Mass. Farm to School also supports. Members of the public are invited to submit thoughts, comments or suggestions regarding either program at this public hearing.

**What to do:** The process is a little complicated - we will help you every step of the way!

1. **Sign up to provide spoken testimony by filling out this [google form](#) or emailing Lisa Damon ([lisa@massfarmtoschool.org](mailto:lisa@massfarmtoschool.org)).** All spoken testimonies will be via zoom. We are using this form to get your information, and when the hearing opens for sign ups, we will sign you up and make sure you get all the information you need to participate.
2. Prepare your testimony by writing it out. Testimony is limited to **3 minutes**, which for most people is 2 double-spaced pages or one single-spaced page. Be sure to read your testimony out loud at least once before the hearing and time yourself to be within 2-3 minutes.
3. On **January 4**, you'll have to sign into Zoom at the beginning of the hearing (time TBD) and wait for your turn. However, you can turn your camera off and be on mute, and we will text you when the Farm to School bill is coming up (several bills will be considered on that day). That way, you can be ready to go.

If you have questions we are here to help! Contact Lisa Damon at MFTS ([lisa@massfarmtoschool.org](mailto:lisa@massfarmtoschool.org))

### What should your comments say?

- Be sure to include our request:
  - *Please support H.686 and S.349, "An Act establishing farm to school grants to promote healthy eating and strengthen the agricultural economy".*
- In a few sentences, say why YOU PERSONALLY support this request. The committee appreciates when spoken testimony comes from the heart, so be sure to include your real reason for showing up at this hearing. YOUR VOICE is important, no matter what perspective you come from. Say why Farm to School is important to YOU.
- Thank legislators for supporting Senator Lesser's amendment to fund the start of the Farm to School Grant Program at \$1million in the recent COVID recovery funds appropriations bill.
- In a sentence or two mention your support for the [Universal School Meals bill](#) also being considered today and explain these two programs are stronger together—increasing access to healthy, local school meals and local food education.
- If you like, add a talking point or two from below.
- Remember to speak slowly, clearly, concisely, and respectfully.

### Farm to School Grant Program Talking Points

*Pick one or two of the talking points below and add YOUR OWN reasons for supporting this bill, or YOUR organization or school's specific data points, if applicable.*

OVERALL THEME: Farm to School improves student health and academic achievement while strengthening the Massachusetts agricultural economy.

Farm to School...

- ...provides eligible schools and early education and care programs with critical funds needed to expand farm-to-school activities, which include:
  - purchasing and serving local foods in school meals
  - educating students on nutrition and food systems
  - providing garden-based learning opportunities
- ...empowers schools to renovate their kitchens, train their staff, and inspire students
- ...supports local farmers with financial opportunity
- ...helps lowest-income public schools where the needs are greatest

Supporting students to develop healthy eating habits at a young age can prevent diet-related diseases later on, which can reduce health costs for both individuals and the state over time.

Experiential and garden-based learning, which is at the root of farm to school education, supports effective teaching of core subject areas as well as critical social and emotional learning.

Our communities are stronger when we have good connections between our families, our schools, and our farms.

Thank you for supporting farm to school programming by including \$1million in the recent COVID recovery funds appropriations bill to fund the first year of the program. Please establish a permanent Farm to School Grant Program here in Massachusetts by supporting *H.686 and S.349, "An Act establishing farm to school grants to promote healthy eating and strengthen the agricultural economy"*.

The public hearings will be available to watch live through the [MA Legislature website](#).