

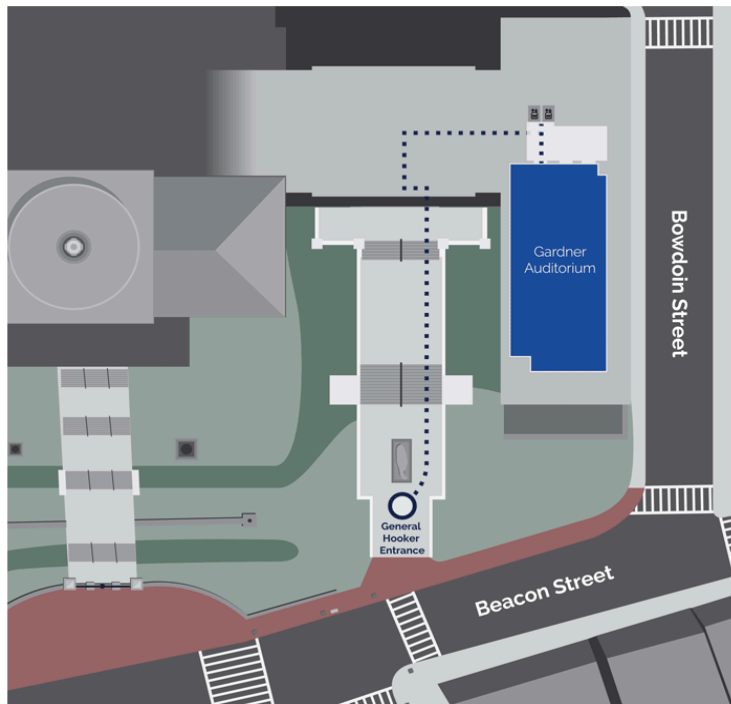
Instructions

Instructions for Submitting Testimony

in support of S.311 & H.565, *“An Act establishing the Massachusetts farm to school program”*

Information on the Public Hearing for S.311 & H.565:

- **When:** Monday July 21, 2025 at 11:00 A.M.
- **Where:** Massachusetts Statehouse at 24 Beacon Street, Gardner Auditorium, Boston, MA 02133 **OR** virtually live at [this link](#).
- Get to Gardner Auditorium in the State House no later than 10:15 A.M. At approximately 10:30 A.M. staff in the hearing room will start accepting names of people who want to testify.
- Directions to Gardner Auditorium



To get to Gardner Auditorium:

1. Approach the General Hooker entrance from Beacon Street.
2. Proceed through the General Hooker Entrance.
3. Pass through the security checkpoint.
4. Take a right down the hallway.
5. Take the elevator on the left down to Floor GA.
6. Exit the elevator. Gardner Auditorium is directly ahead of you.

[Directions to the State House](#)

To Submit Oral Testimony:

How to Register for Virtual Testimony

- If you are interested in testifying virtually,
 - You must register by completing [this form](#) before **12:00 p.m. on Friday, July 18th, 2025**. This form is the Joint Committee on Education’s registration form.
 - You must complete [this short form](#). This form is Mass Farm to School’s tracking tool, designed to help us offer support to individuals who are providing testimony.

- Those who sign up to testify virtually will receive further instruction on how to participate in the hearing by email from Legislative Information Services (LIS) AFTER the registration deadline expires and the form closes.
- You can turn your camera off and be on mute until you are called to present.

How to Register for In-Person Testimony

- If you are interested in testifying in-person, you can register in-person at the time of the hearing.
- **We highly encourage you to register ahead of time using [this form](#).** This form is the Joint Committee on Education's registration form.
- You must complete [this short form](#). This form is Mass Farm to School's tracking tool, designed to help us offer support to individuals who are providing testimony.

Additional Information about Oral Testimony

- It is important for the Joint Committee on Education to hear from organizational leaders, school staff, parents, and/or farmers on the importance of Farm to School programs at the public hearing. YOUR VOICE is important, no matter what perspective you come from. Say why Farm to School is important to YOU.
- Testimony is limited to 2 minutes per individual, which for most people is 2 double-spaced pages or one single-spaced page.
- You can submit written testimony in addition to testifying orally. If you plan to submit written testimony, you can present a shortened version of your letter orally.

Tips for Presenting

Before the Public Hearing

1. You will need to prepare
 - a. Talking points for your testimony; and
 - b. Shorter Summary Written Testimony to be filed in the record.
2. Be sure to read your testimony out loud at least once before the hearing and time yourself (you can use the "stopwatch" feature if you have a smartwatch or just use a regular clock).
3. OVERALL THEME: Farm to School improves student health and academic achievement while strengthening the Massachusetts agricultural economy.

During the Public Hearing

1. Public Hearings tend to be long. The Chairs reserve the right to call public officials out of turn and change the hearing agenda. Don't worry! Everyone who registered to testify will get an opportunity to do so. If you complete [this form](#), Rebecca or Simca will text you to let you know when you will be up to present.
2. It is common for Committee members to come in and out of the room during the hearing as they often have multiple commitments. Don't worry if they don't all hear your testimony. It will be entered in the public record and reviewed throughout the legislative process.

3. Don't be concerned if you hear someone else testifying on the same topic. That is the plan! Definitely do NOT change your plan at the hearing. That almost never goes well. Just give your prepared testimony and know that legislators want to hear your story! If you have questions we are here to help. Contact Rebecca Kelley, Mass. Farm to School. Her email is policy@massfarmtoschool.org.
4. Speak slowly, clearly, concisely, and respectfully.
5. The committee appreciates when oral testimony comes from the heart, so be sure to include YOUR real reason for showing up at this hearing. It's ok to read, as long as you are reading something that speaks your own truth.
6. The committee members may want to ask questions about your testimony.
 - a. Please wait briefly after you complete your testimony so members have time to ask any questions.
 - b. Respond politely, concisely, and directly to the question posed.
 - c. If you are asked a question you don't have answers to, please respond "I don't know, but I'm happy to find the answer and submit it after the hearing." Answers can be submitted after the hearing in writing. The staff at Mass Farm to School will work with you to craft an answer.

Structuring your Oral Testimony

- 1. Introduction.**
 - a. Look directly at the Chairs (Senator Lewis and Representative Gordon). Thank them formally with a short sentence like, "Mr.Chairs, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today."
- 2. Identify yourself with your name, your town of residence, and your role and any coalitions or organizations you are speaking on behalf of.**
 - a. EX, "My name is [full name], I am a [teacher/parent/concerned citizen/farmer] at [organization]. I am a resident of [Town]."
 - b. If you are a member of the MA Food for MA Kids Coalition please also state that.
- 3. State the bill you testify in support of.**
 - a. "I am testifying in support of S.311 & H.565, "An Act establishing the Massachusetts farm to school program." This bill would codify a competitive grant program and a local food incentive within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education."
- 4. Deliver your personal story.**
 - a. Tell the legislators why YOU care about this issue. It is important for them to hear about how programs impact people, businesses or families directly, so try to focus more on your own story and what is true for you.
 - b. Pick an event/ personal example that you have worked directly on or been affected directly by that you are comfortable sharing that explains why FTS is important to you. EX,
 - i. "Farm to school programming allowed my child's school to host a family event that brought community members together and educated me on child nutrition programs. This event was made possible by the Mass FRESH grant."
 - ii. "As a school nutrition professional, my district has experienced the impact of USDA cuts to local food for schools and farm to school grants."
- 5. End with a statement on how this bill would have helped prevent negative experiences or will increase positive experiences.** EX,
 - a. "A statewide farm to school program would enable schools to keep offering impactful educational events for families."

- b. "A local food incentive would allow us to continue purchasing fresh ingredients from local producers."

Farm to School Program Talking Points

Pick one or two of the talking points from the [bill fact sheet](#) and add YOUR OWN reasons for supporting this bill, or YOUR organization or school's specific data points, if applicable.

To Submit Written Testimony:

1. The Committee will accept written testimony until **July 28th, 2025**.
2. We highly encourage you to submit your testimony before the public hearing on July 21st.
3. You must complete [this short form](#). This form is Mass Farm to School's tracking tool, designed to help us offer support to individuals who are providing testimony.
4. Send an email addressed to
 - a. Research Director and Senior Policy Counsel
 - i. Fiona Bruce-Baiden: jointcommittee.education@malegislature.gov
 - ii. Emily Reynolds: emily.reynolds@masenate.gov
 - b. Both chairs of the committee
 - i. Senator Jason Lewis: Jason.Lewis@masenate.gov
 - ii. Representative Kenneth I. Gordon: Ken.Gordon@mahouse.gov
 - c. Copy their staff members
 - i. Dennis Burke (Staff, Sen. Lewis): Dennis.Burke@masenate.gov
 - ii. Jessica Foley (Staff, Rep. Gordon): Jessica.Foley@mahouse.gov
 - d. Copy Mass. Farm to School staff, who are tracking all testimonies in support of the bill
 - i. Simca Horwitz (Staff, Mass. Farm to School):
simca@massfarmtoschool.org
 - ii. Rebecca Kelley (Consultant, Mass. Farm to School):
policy@massfarmtoschool.org
5. Your written testimony can either be the actual body of the email, or it can be attached as a PDF or Word document.
6. **Email Format**

Subject Line:

EDUCATION COMMITTEE TESTIMONY, H.565 & S.311

To:

Fiona Bruce-Baiden: jointcommittee.education@malegislature.gov

Emily Reynolds: emily.reynolds@masenate.gov

Senator Jason Lewis: Jason.Lewis@masenate.gov

Representative Kenneth I. Gordon: Ken.Gordon@mahouse.gov

Copy:

Dennis Burke (Staff, Sen. Lewis): Dennis.Burke@masenate.gov

Jessica Foley (Staff, Rep. Gordon): Jessica.Foley@mahouse.gov

Simca Horwitz (Staff, Mass. Farm to School): simca@massfarmtoschool.org

Rebecca Kelley (consultant, Mas Farm to School):

policy@massfarmtoschool.org

Email Body (Only use if you are providing your testimony as an attachment):

Dear esteemed Chairs of the Joint Committee on Education,

*Attached you will find written testimony in support of bill S.311 & H.565
"An Act establishing the Massachusetts farm to school program".*

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Thank you for your service,

*First and Last Name
Town*

Sample Testimony

Sample Written Testimony

in support of S.311 & H.565, *"An Act establishing the Massachusetts farm to school program"*

Subject Line: EDUCATION COMMITTEE TESTIMONY, H.565 & S.311

To:

Fiona Bruce-Baiden: jointcommittee.education@malegislature.gov

Emily Reynolds: emily.reynolds@masenate.gov

Senator Jason Lewis: Jason.Lewis@masenate.gov

Representative Kenneth I. Gordon: Ken.Gordon@mahouse.gov

Copy:

Dennis Burke (Staff, Sen. Lewis): Dennis.Burke@masenate.gov

Jessica Foley (Staff, Rep. Gordon): Jessica.Foley@mahouse.gov

Simca Horwitz (Staff, Mass. Farm to School): simca@massfarmtoschool.org

Rebecca Kelley (consultant, Mas Farm to School): policy@massfarmtoschool.org

Body Text:

Senator Jason Lewis
Chair, Joint Committee on Education
24 Beacon Street
Room 511-B
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Kenneth I. Gordon
Chair, Joint Committee on Education
24 Beacon Street
Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

[Date]

Testimony in Support of S.311 & H.565

"An Act establishing the Massachusetts farm to school program"

Dear Chairs Lewis and Gordon of the Joint Committee on Education,

My name is [full name] and I am representing [name of organization]/am a resident of [city/town]. I am writing to ask you to support S.311 & H.565 "An Act establishing the Massachusetts farm to school program", filed by Senator Comerford and Representatives Patricia A. Duffy and Andres X. Vargas, respectively. This bill would codify a competitive grant program and a local food incentive within the Department of Elementary and

Secondary Education. Together these two initiatives would help more schools and early education programs provide students with healthy, locally grown foods in school meals while offering new markets for our farmers and fishermen. The initiatives would also increase access to experiential education, such as school gardens and would support the infrastructure investments, staff training, and educational initiatives that lead to farm to school program success and sustainability. Farm to school programs have a cross-sector impact, improving student achievement and access to healthy foods, as well as spurring investments in local businesses and providing workforce development opportunities for school staff. When paired with universal school meals, school food programs have more funds to buy local food, sending more money back into the local economy.

Why do YOU support farm to school programs? Share local anecdotes and/or a story that shows the benefits, impact, and potential of farm to school in your community. If you have used or benefited from Northeast Food for Schools, a Local Incentive, share details of the impact. If you received a MA FRESH grant, describe the importance of the project to your community. Below is a guide on how to structure your story

- **State your identity/role and how it informs why you care about this bill.** EX,
 - “I am a parent of a school aged child and I am concerned about the decreased funding for schools to purchase fresher and healthier options for students.”
 - “I am a student and have experienced the benefits of a well-funded farm to school program.”
 - “I am a local farmer who depends on relationships with schools to keep my business thriving.”
- **Pick an event/ personal example that you have worked directly on or been affected directly by that you are comfortable sharing that explains why FTS is important to you.** EX,
 - “Farm to school programming allowed my child’s school to host a family event that brought community members together and educated me on child nutrition programs. This event was made possible by the Mass FRESH grant.”
 - “As a school nutrition professional, my district has experienced the impact of USDA cuts to local food for schools and farm to school grants.”
- **End with a statement that a statewide farm to school program would have helped prevent negative experiences or will increase positive experiences.** EX,
 - “A statewide farm to school program would enable schools to keep offering impactful educational events for families.”
 - “A local food incentive would allow us to continue purchasing fresh ingredients from local producers.”

Here is an example of what you might write)

Our schools want to serve more local and healthy produce, but outdated kitchens and under trained staff stand in their way. The FRESH grant program empowers schools to renovate their kitchens, train their staff, inspire students, and support local farmers with financial opportunity. In addition, these grants help our lowest-income public schools where the needs are greatest. The

statewide organization, Massachusetts Farm to School, will add further leverage to this program by providing free training and technical assistance to all grant recipients, making the monies appropriated for this program stretch even further!

(or this)

Farm to School is a great investment for Massachusetts - contributing to local economic development, student health, and academic achievement. For every dollar spent on purchasing vegetables directly from a Massachusetts farmer, an additional \$1.12 in local economic activity is generated. Massachusetts schools spend approximately \$170 million on food each school year, and it would benefit all Massachusetts residents to direct more of this spending back into local economies across the state. In fact, Massachusetts Farm to School reports that if we doubled the amount of local food purchased for Massachusetts school meals, that would contribute an additional \$20+ million to the state's economy.

(or this)

Farm to School programs help schools serve healthier, local food, which has been proven to increase academic achievement and participation in school nutrition programs. With these programs, more kids - especially those coming from homes that struggle with food insecurity - are eating more nutritious meals which help them grow and thrive at school. 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. Research has shown that the 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.

Given [recent USDA cuts to the federal Local Food for Schools program](#), now, more than ever, we need the state to demonstrate support for these common sense programs that increase access to healthy foods for kids and support local producers.

Providing schools with the continued resources they need to start up or expand local food sourcing and education activities is a win for our kids, our farmers, and our communities. Together, we can improve student health and academic achievement while strengthening our state's agricultural economy. S.311 & H.565 will help achieve these goals. **I encourage the Joint Committee on Education to support the establishment of a farm to school program through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by voting favorably on S.311 & H.565 "An Act establishing the Massachusetts farm to school program".**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
[full name]

[city/town of residency]