



January 22, 2015

Secretary Jay Ash
 Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
 One Ashburton Place, Room 2101
 Boston, MA 02108

Secretary Matthew Beaton
 Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
 Boston, MA 02114

Re: Meeting Request – Implementation of the Massachusetts Food Trust Program

Dear Secretary Ash and Secretary Beaton:

On behalf of our organizations, we would like to warmly congratulate you on your recent appointments to serve as senior officials in the Baker Administration. We know that we share the

common goals of improving the quality of life, economic wellbeing, and public health for all residents of Massachusetts, and we look forward to working together with you toward these ends.

We request the opportunity for a small group of us to meet with you jointly to discuss the implementation of the newly-created Massachusetts Food Trust Program, established by the legislature in Chapter 286 of the Acts of 2014 (the Environmental Bond Bill). Chapter 286 establishes **the Massachusetts Food Trust Program as a flexible financing program to provide loans, grants, and technical assistance to support the development, renovation, and expansion of healthy food retailers and food enterprises in parts of the state that need them the most.** This program is established under the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, with \$2 million in bond funding authorized under the Department of Agricultural Resources.

This program was developed as a result of the Grocery Access Task Force, **a group of public and private sector leaders who came together over two years to develop recommendations to improve access to healthy food while spurring economic investment in low and moderate income communities.** The proposal is designed to be flexible enough to address community-specific needs. This could include support for supermarkets, corner stores, farmer's markets, and mobile markets, as well as community kitchens, food truck commissaries, indoor and outdoor greenhouses, and food distribution hubs.

Too many Massachusetts communities face poor access to healthy, affordable foods, which has been shown to undermine the health of children and families. A report released by The Food Trust in 2011 showed that large swaths of urban and rural Massachusetts lack good access to a full service grocery store. Research shows that people who live in communities without a grocery store suffer from disproportionately high rates of obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related health problems – conditions which can be debilitating and costly.

Similar approaches to the Massachusetts Food Trust Program have been adopted in numerous other states and cities across the country, including Pennsylvania, New York, New Orleans, New Jersey, California, and Illinois.

Experience has shown that increased access to healthy food retail has created local jobs and spurred economic vitality.

- The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative has supported more than 5,000 jobs since it was created in 2004.
- The California FreshWorks Fund has created or retained more than 1,300 jobs since 2011.

In other states, public financing has leveraged significant private investment.

- An initial \$10 million investment in New York State has leveraged an additional \$145 million in private and federal investment.
- In Pennsylvania, an initial \$30 million investment has leveraged \$190 million of total investment, the vast majority from private sources.

Federal funding is now also available to maximize state support through the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the successful implementation of this program with you at your convenience. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact Maddie Ribble at the Massachusetts Public Health Association (857-263-7072 x111 or mribble@mphaweb.org) for further information.

Sincerely,



Rebekah Gewirtz, MPA
Massachusetts Public Health Association



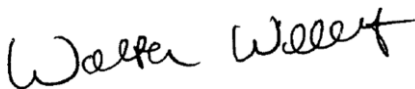
Yael Lehmann
The Food Trust



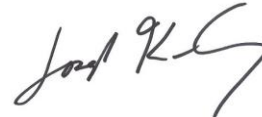
Keith Mahoney
The Boston Foundation



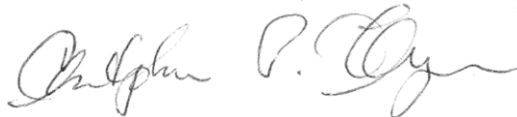
Jessica del Rosario
Massachusetts Convergence Partnership



Walter C. Willett, M.D., Dr. P.H.
**Harvard School of Public Health,
Department of Nutrition**



Joe Kriesberg
**Massachusetts Association of Community
Development Corporations**



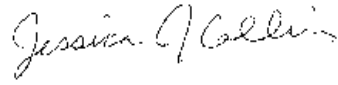
Christopher Flynn
Massachusetts Food Association



Sasha Corken
Allston Brighton Health Collaborative



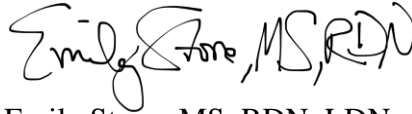
Raymond Considine, MSW
Health Resources in Action



Jessica Collins, MS
**Partners for a Healthier Community,
Live Well Springfield**



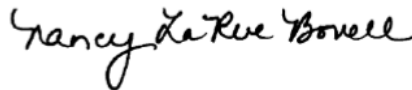
Kerrie D'Entremont
Greater Lowell Health Alliance



Emily Stone, MS, RDN, LDN
Massachusetts Dietetic Association



Heather McMann, MBA
Groundwork Lawrence



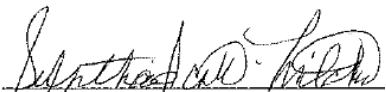
Nancy Bonell
Voices for a Healthy South Coast



David Waters
Community Servings



Joyce Dwyer
Old Colony YMCA



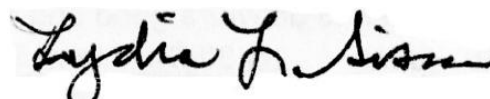
Synthia Mitchell
Springfield Food Policy Council



Peter Doliber
Massachusetts Alliance of YMCAs



Liz Sheehan Castro
**Worcester Food and Active Living
Policy Council**



Lydia Sisson
Mill City Grows



Kathy Viens
**Holyoke Food and Fitness Policy
Council**



Philip Korman
Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture



David Aronstein

Boston Alliance for Community Health



Stephen Curry

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Stacia Clinton, RD., LDN.

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David P. Stevens

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Huy Nguyen, MD

Boston Public Health Commission



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Michelle Whelan

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Wendy Garf-Lipp

United Neighbors of Fall River



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Claude-Alix Jacob, MPH

Cambridge Public Health Department



Sam Wong

MetroWest Moves



Michael McManus, MD

**American Academy of Pediatrics,
Massachusetts Chapter**



Jeanne Pinado

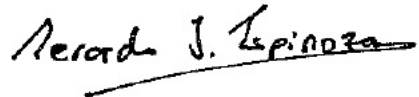
Madison Park Development Corporation



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Gerardo Espinoza
Local Enterprise Assistance Fund



James O'Brien
Northeast Harvest



Valerie Frias
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Mary Cassesso
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