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MASSACHUSETTS FARM BUREAU FEDERATION'S

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NEWS & VIEWS

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Governor Healey & Lieutenant Governor Driscoll File \$56.1 Billion Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

The Healey-Driscoll Administration filed its Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget recommendation, a \$56.1 billion plan that responsibly controls spending growth while investing in education, infrastructure and housing to make Massachusetts more affordable and improve quality of life.

"Our Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposal is balanced, responsible and forward-looking. It protects

taxpayer dollars while also making crucial investments to lower costs for people and improve quality of life," said Governor Maura Healey. "Together, we can make child care more affordable and accessible for families, ensure every student is receiving a high-quality education, and improve our public transportation, roads and bridges. We thank the Legislature for their consideration of our proposal and look forward to our partnership throughout the budget process."

"As a former mayor, and someone who has traveled around the state listening to our local officials, I'm proud of the way that this budget proposal responds to local needs," said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll. "We're fully funding the Student Opportunity Act to make sure our K-12 schools have equitable access to the resources their students and educators need. We're also increasing the amount of local aid going to cities and towns and boosting Chapter

90 funding to improve roads and bridges, particularly in rural communities."

This budget, filed as House 2, fully funds the fourth year of the Student Opportunity Act, increases local aid, and pays for the next phase in of the historic tax cuts enacted last year that will begin delivering savings to Massachusetts residents this Spring.

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*Mark Your Calendars:
Ag Day At The Statehouse Is April 3!*

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President's Column

By: Warren Shaw, MFBF President

For the most part agriculture in our country survives on good economics, a government that likes to give away food, and trustworthy, political advocacy from Farm Bureau.

In Europe there is a battle going on that has farmers protesting and creating chaos in the population centers. Their protests have been confronted with armored vehicles and armed government forces.

They certainly have a lot to complain about. Everything from significant overregulation, which they originally complied with, but now is smothering them. Their markets have been challenged by cheap food imports, and European agricultural policy that caused failure across the industry. They have faced rules that force them to set aside land to encourage biodiversity and in the dairy industry the effort to cut down the size of herds due to the "environmental crisis."

Sounds like they let it go too long, and they have finally had enough.

You're probably thinking they're a bunch of third world banana republics and we won't ever have to face anything like that.

Maybe.

I bring this to your attention because if you look at what's happening in Europe, it's a stretch to think that economic challenges brought by political forces could not happen here.

My point?

The backbone of our industry, which keeps things like this from happening here, is our organization.

Top to bottom, from the county member who sits on a board of directors or the farmer member who proposes a resolution to get the support of the industry, brings action.

Our state organization exist to serve the members and to be aware of the political climate and act accordingly.

We have two of the finest, Karen Schwalbe and Nick John, who are interacting with industry partners on a daily basis and following up on member concerns.

In the last year, we have been able to be at the table to play defense on proposed legislation and potential regulation that would be harmful to our farmers.

If we think about the Farm Bureau approach here in Massachusetts and nationally with AFBF standing for the viability of our entire industry, we have protection from lunatic government groups.

The message here is to thank the many farmers, who support with their dues the efforts of Farm Bureau, and to those who have not joined us, it is time.

It is easy for those of us who live here in Massachusetts to get into a comfort zone. Last year there was \$20 million appropriated for farmers who were flooded out, the dairy tax credit was increased, and legislation that could have been an

economic disaster faced effective pushback.

For those of us that understand the value of Farm Bureau, it's important that we spread the word. In order for Farm Bureau to be effective we need numbers and we need leadership.

I'm putting out the call for membership growth. Each and every county in our state should have a membership chairman who should interact with state staff every month to create a strategy for membership growth.

Preventing the type of economic disaster currently going on in Europe can best be achieved by an effective grassroots organization like ours.

Growing membership will make us stronger.

Warren Shaw
MFBF President
warren@mfbf.net

Executive Director's Column

By: Karen Schwalbe, MFBF Executive Director

Climate change poses a significant challenge for farmers, demanding immediate attention and proactive adaptation strategies. The steady rise in global temperatures and alterations in precipitation patterns, largely attributed to human-induced factors such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, have begun to manifest in tangible ways within agricultural landscapes.

Engaging with farmers across diverse backgrounds, I've encountered a spectrum of perspectives on climate change, ranging from skepticism to acknowledgment of its gravity. While skepticism persists among some, it's essential to recognize the overwhelming scientific consensus that underscores the reality of climate change and its human-driven causes. This consensus is founded upon robust interdisciplinary research, similar to the methods used in regulating pesticides and assessing GMOs.

The local impacts of climate change are certainly tangible. Our farmers on the front lines are witnessing the not-so-subtle shifts and increasing challenges in our growing seasons. We are seeing changes in precipitation patterns, temperature extremes, pest and disease pressure, and shifts in growing seasons. This past growing season challenged farmers across the state, and the changes are

beyond subtle.

Amidst these challenges, there's a growing convergence of political, scientific, and public efforts to address climate change. Initiatives such as the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience and legislative task forces signify a concerted push towards finding solutions. Additionally, municipalities are actively seeking to mitigate the impacts of climate change within their communities, amplifying the urgency of action.

While the imperative for climate solutions is clear, it's equally crucial to recognize the economic opportunities they present for farmers. Sustainable and climate-resilient practices not only offer environmental benefits but also potential economic gains. Programs such as the Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) and Climate Smart Agriculture Program (CSP) provide avenues for farmers to adopt these practices while enhancing their economic viability. The new Climate Pollution Reduction Grant focuses on electrification of mid- and large-sized vehicles. The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP) Action Grants through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs have been used to support small farms. Transitioning to climate-smart practices can increase the economic viability of our farms.

However, amidst the drive for climate action, it's urgent that we address farmers' legitimate concerns regarding regulatory uncertainties and potential policy changes. Any effective climate policy must strike a balance between environmental sustainability and the economic viability of agricultural operations. By incorporating the perspectives and needs of farmers into the policy making process, we can ensure that climate policies are not only impactful but also equitable.

Looking ahead, the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation is taking proactive steps in addressing climate change. The establishment of a dedicated Climate Change Committee underscores our commitment to policy advocacy, technical assistance, education, and outreach in this critical area. We invite farmers to reach out, share their insights, concerns, and specific issues, as we strive to preserve our agriculture for future generations.

Please reach out to Warren or me if you would like to be involved in this effort.

Karen Schwalbe
MFBF Executive Director
karen@mfbf.net

Great news for Farmer members: Installment payment option is now available!

Farmer members now have the option of paying their membership in full (\$225) or choosing monthly payments (\$18.75). This feature is only available online when payment is made by credit card or electronic check and is only available at the Farmer membership level (and above).

There is also an option to auto-renew your yearly membership!

Questions? Send an email to kim@mfbf.net or call our office at 508-481-4766.



The Federal Farm Bill: What It Is & Why It's Important

What is the Federal Farm Bill?

The Federal Farm Bill is a package of legislation passed roughly once every five years that has a tremendous impact on farming livelihoods, how food is grown, and what kinds of foods are grown.

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, the latest reauthorization, included funding for 12 titles (which can be found here: <https://www.usda.gov/farbill>), but four of those areas typically make up the majority of spending in the bill:

- Nutrition includes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides funds for low-income Americans to purchase food in retail stores in addition to smaller programs that provide other assistance.
- Crop Insurance covers subsidies for farmers' insurance premiums and support for companies that insure agricultural commodities.
- Commodity Programs cover price and income support to growers of non-perishable crops as well as agricultural disaster assistance.
- Conservation includes funding for farmers to implement resource-saving practices on their private land.

Farmers' Guide to 2018 USDA Farm Bill Programs

You can find the Farmer's Guide at the end of this article.

Farm Bill Extension

On Nov. 16, 2023, President Biden signed into law H.R. 6363, the Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act 2024, which extended the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, more commonly known as the 2018 Farm Bill. This extension allows authorized programs to continue through Sep. 30, 2024.

Why Do We Need a New Farm Bill?

- The 2018 Farm Bill is good policy, but simply extending it fails to address the changing landscape of agriculture.
- The extension passed last year only lasts until September 30. Without a new farm bill, we face the prospect of programs reverting back to Great Depression era policy.
- Since the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, the U.S. has experienced a pandemic, record-high inflation, rising supply costs, and global unrest. A new farm bill every 5 years helps address the modern challenges facing

farmers and ranchers.

- China and the European Union are outspending the United States in agricultural research and development. We must invest to ensure America's farmers can continue leading the world in productivity while meeting sustainability goals.
- In its ruling on California's Proposition 12, the Supreme Court ruled that only Congress could stop states from enacting laws that affect farmers' ability to grow food for the nation. The farm bill presents an opportunity for Congress to address that issue.

Last Year, MFBF actively engaged with members and staff of our state's federal legislative delegation to discuss the importance of the Federal Farm Bill and offer suggestions based on the unique needs of Massachusetts. These meetings included a Farm Bill Roundtable discussion with Congressman Jake Auchincloss (D-4th District), a meeting with Representative Lori Trahan (D-3rd District), and meetings with staff from U.S. Senator Ed Markey and U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren's offices.

Here is a list of Massachusetts Farm Bill Priorities that were highlighted in our discussions with the federal delegation:

Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation's Farm Bill Priorities

Overview:

Unity of farm programs and nutrition programs

- It is critical that the 2023 Farm Bill remains a united bill with funding for both farm programs and nutrition programs.
- A unified farm bill ensures the important acknowledgement that agriculture and food/nutrition policies go hand in hand, and without farm policy, we lack nutrition policy.
- Food Security is critical; investment in agriculture through farm bill programs helps secure the domestic food supply while consumers get the benefits of high-quality, affordable food.
- It also helps keep rural, suburban, and urban Congressional members working together in a bipartisan manner because even though they may care about one portion of the bill more than others, they know they have to work collaboratively to pass the bill to meet their constituents' needs.

Northeast Priorities:

Keeping agriculture and the

nutrition aspects Farm Bill together and not divided.

- This is especially important in the Northeast where we have members of Congress in very urban areas who care about the nutrition programs as well as Representatives who care deeply about the farm programs.

Maintaining at least level Farm Bill funding

- With the recent passage of several large spending packages, there may be a desire by some to rein in spending especially when the CBO estimated that the farm bill may be over a trillion dollars in spending.
- Instead of focusing on the overall price tag, focus on what the individual programs mean for Northeast farmers.

Funding for USDA Staff (FSA, NRCS, NASS, etc.)

- Ensuring adequate staffing at USDA offices enables farmers to better utilize technical assistance, access funding, and make certain that valuable farm data is being collected to make better informed decisions about Northeast agriculture.

Research and extension funds

- Agricultural research and extension funds are core to ensuring the economic viability of Northeast agriculture. These research and extension funds ensure that farmers can work with their land grant universities on the latest science and technologies.
- Specific funding of importance:
 - ACER program (maple research)
 - Specialty crop research and investment

Research into PFAS impacts on farms and assistance for impacted operations

Risk Management Programs

- Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) provides critical crop insurance for specialty crop growers. It is critical that the program:
 - Remain a pilot program which allows additional flexibilities to meet farmers' needs.
 - Ensure that farmers are able to access the program for their specific crop needs.
 - Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance (NAP)
 - Simplification and expansion of NAP to provide financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops, including those grown for food or horticulture, to protect against natural disasters that prevent crop planting or result in economic loss.

- Altering the NAP crop insurance planting deadline to provide multiple planting deadlines for long season crops such as vegetables.

- Contract growers; ensuring crop insurance and risk management programs are available to those contract growers who don't always qualify for programs.

Disaster assistance that better meets the needs of Northeast farmers

- As Northeast states were impacted by droughts in 2022, producers were left high and dry without adequate drought assistance that came too little, too late.
- Our drought conditions are different from the West, and the programs should respond appropriately.
- Federal disaster programs aiding producers with forage loss and hay transportation.
- More timely assistance to producers for drought, extreme rain and snow, allowing for expedited assistance to reach farmers.
- Ex: Hurricane damage—currently it just covers wind damage, not rain. The Northeast gets more rain impacts typically from these storm events.
- The development of a permanent program in future farm bills for disaster relief based on a determination by county.

Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) continuation

- The DMC program has proven to be a valuable risk management tool for Northeast dairy farms, and it is important to continue the program with some updates.
- Increasing the 5-million-pound limit for Tier 1.
- Increasing the margin coverage from \$9.50 to adjust for inflationary costs.

Urban Agriculture

- Due to the unique nature of the Northeast, it is poised to be a major intersection for urban agriculture.
- To ensure the continued development of urban agriculture, it is critical to build upon funding and resources allocated under the 2018 Farm Bill for USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.
- Not only does this provide support for urban farmers, but it helps to support knowledge of agriculture in urban areas.
- Better data collection on urban agriculture in the Northeast.

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Governor & Lieutenant Governor File FY 2025 Budget

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News and Views is published six times a year by Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation. Subscription comes with membership. It is received in the homes of almost 3,000 MFBF members.

MFBF's mission is to strengthen a diverse agricultural community by supporting and advocating for Massachusetts farm families.

MFBF's Vision Statement is: Massachusetts Farm Bureau envisions a world with plentiful high-quality agricultural products, productive open land, and a robust and prosperous farming community. We are committed to working with like-minded groups to achieve these goals.

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Additionally, the budget proposes to invest \$1.3 billion in revenue generated by the voter-approved Fair Share surtax to support transformative investments in education and transportation. These include the administration's new Gateway to Pre-K initiative, which puts Massachusetts on the path to universal Pre-K access in Gateway Cities by 2026 and would expand child care financial assistance to thousands more families. It also includes the new Literacy Launch program, a transformative plan to improve early literacy education and ensure students receive the highest quality, evidence-based reading instruction available.

The administration also proposed utilizing Fair Share funds to increase funding for roads and bridges, including dedicated road aid for rural communities, implement a low-income fares program at the MBTA, and make a new investment of \$250 million in transportation that will leverage \$1.1 billion in borrowing over the next five years to tackle long overdue deferred maintenance. House 2 also follows through on Governor Healey's commitment to propose doubling operating assistance for the MBTA.

House 2 maintains \$475 million in Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grants, fully supports universal school meals, continues the MassReconnect program to provide no-cost community college for students aged 25 and older, and maintains 1 percent of total spending for the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

House 2 also proposes to create a new Disaster Relief and Resiliency Fund to better set up Massachusetts to be able to respond quickly to natural disasters, such as the flooding experienced over the past year. This fund would be capitalized with 10 percent of annual excess capital gains, in addition to public and/or private sources, federal grants, settlements, repayments, or reimbursements available for the purpose of delivering aid.

Transportation Funding Task Force

Alongside this budget, Governor Healey signed an executive order to create a new Transportation Funding Task Force. This Task Force will be composed of public and private-sector leaders, representing communities of all sizes across Massachusetts, that will spend the next 12 months examining the state's transportation system and developing recommendations for a long-term, sustainable transportation finance plan that can support safely and reliably support road, rail and transit systems throughout our state.

Supplemental Budget

Governor Healey also filed alongside House 2 a supplemental budget to cover known deficiencies in the emergency assistance shelter system for FY24 and exposures in FY25. The legislation will be consistent with the blueprint already published proposing to move the balance of the Transitional Escrow Fund to a new fund that can be used

to support housing development, as well as shelter costs for the current fiscal year and into FY25.

House 2 Overview

House 2 proposes \$56.1 billion in gross spending, excluding Fair Share surtax and Medical Assistance Trust Fund spending, which represents 2.9 percent spending growth over the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) General Appropriations Act. This growth rate is below the current rate of inflation, based on the Consumer Price Index, and recognizes that the consensus revenue estimate of \$40.2 billion was essentially flat from projections used to build the FY24 budget.

Additionally, this budget proposes to spend \$1.3 billion from the Fair Share surtax on transportation and education in accordance with the consensus revenue estimate developed with legislative leaders and in keeping with the transparent mechanism established in FY24 to track surtax spending.

In light of flat tax revenues, the House 2 recommendation utilizes a thoughtful combination of funding sources to ensure a responsibly balanced budget. Importantly, this budget does not raise broad-based taxes or utilize any funding from the Stabilization Fund balance, which has grown to a record high of over \$8 billion and would continue to grow under House 2.

The consensus revenue estimate assumes \$2 billion in total capital gains revenue. This blueprint allows for a portion of capital gains tax revenues above the statutory threshold, not to exceed \$375 million, to be retained as a last resort to balance the budget and sustain essential programs.

In short, this budget continues needed investments in housing, education, transportation and healthcare, while being fiscally responsible in light of reduced revenue growth.

Spending is also supported by several one-time and new recurring resources, including a proposal to move the Lottery online and a tax amnesty program to help make sure Massachusetts can collect the taxes it's owed.

The recommendation proposes to continue to use excess capital gains to build the Stabilization Fund balance, address pension and other post-employment benefit liabilities, and fund a new Disaster and Resiliency Trust Fund. The budget recommendation maintains the state's commitment to fully fund its pension liability by 2036 with \$4.5 billion in FY25, a \$395 million increase over the FY24 contribution. Projected sales tax revenues will enable a \$1.5 billion transfer to support the operations of the MBTA and \$1.3 billion will be transferred to the Massachusetts School Building Authority to support school construction across the state. The budget also commits \$27 million for the Workforce Training Fund to support the state's workforce, competitiveness, and engine for growth.

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Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee Happenings

Learn more about YF&R at www.MFBF.net!
 Or follow us on social media -  @MAFarmBureauYFR and  @MAFBYoungFamers



Committee Chair Corner

By Heather Bonanno-Baker, MFBF YF&R Chair

The Massachusetts Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&R) Committee had a busy December. We held a Young Farmers Social at the Annual Meeting to meet the agriculture students from UMass Amherst. We also joined forces with the Promotion and Education Committee to put on bingo after the dinner banquet on Thursday night of the meeting. Thank you for all your support with bingo. The money raised goes towards helping us attend AFBF Leadership conferences.

This year, the leadership conference will be held in Omaha, Nebraska, March 8-11. We hope to have a good representation from Massachusetts. I will be retiring from the American

Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee during this conference, and your Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Vice President Ryan MacKay will be appointed. This is a huge deal for Massachusetts. Being such a small state, it is great to have us serve back-to-back terms and represent Massachusetts. During my time on the AFBF committee, I have been able to travel the country and gain amazing leadership skills. I currently serve as the discussion meet subcommittee chair. With the help of my committee, I ran a very successful competition in Salt Lake City for the AFBF Convention and hopefully will have the same success with the collegiate discussion meet competition in Omaha.

But here in Massachusetts, there is a lot of work to do with the Young Farmers and Ranchers. We were able to grab some new committee members from our Annual Meeting in Amherst but are still looking for more. If you know of anyone, please let them know about us and what we do. We are willing to come to your area and meet with young farmers. If you are interested in hosting us for an event or tour, please email me!

Thank you!
Heather Bonanno-Baker
 YF&R Committee Chair

Upcoming County Farm Bureau Legislative Breakfasts

- March 8** Tri-County Legislative Breakfast (Hampshire, Hampden & Franklin Counties)
 Starting time: 11:00 a.m.
 Location: Blue Bonnet Diner, 324 King St, Northampton, MA 01060
 RSVP to: Jaime Wagner 413-218-2695(call/text) or wagner41781@gmail.com
- March 15** Berkshire County Farm Bureau's Legislative Breakfast
 Starting time: 9:00 a.m.
 Location: Holiday Farm Inc., Dalton
- March 15** Worcester County Farm Bureau's Legislative Breakfast
 Starting time: 7:00 a.m.
 Location: Hollis Hills Farm, Fitchburg
 RSVP: Mike Pineo mpineopfp@aol.com or 978-422-7350 (Leave Voicemail)
- March 15** Plymouth County Farm Bureau's Legislative Breakfast
 Starting time: 7:00 a.m.
 Location: Boston Tavern, Middleboro
 RSVP: Lisa Blair 508-866-9150
- March 21** Essex County Farm Bureau's Legislative Breakfast
 Starting time: 8:00 a.m.
 Location: Coolidge Hall, Topsfield Fairgrounds
- March 22** Bristol County Farm Bureau Legislative Breakfast
 Starting time: 7:30 a.m.
 Location: Berkley American Legion 80 Myricks St. Berkley
- March 28** Middlesex County Farm Bureau's Legislative Breakfast
 Starting time: 8:00 a.m.
 Location: Wayside Inn

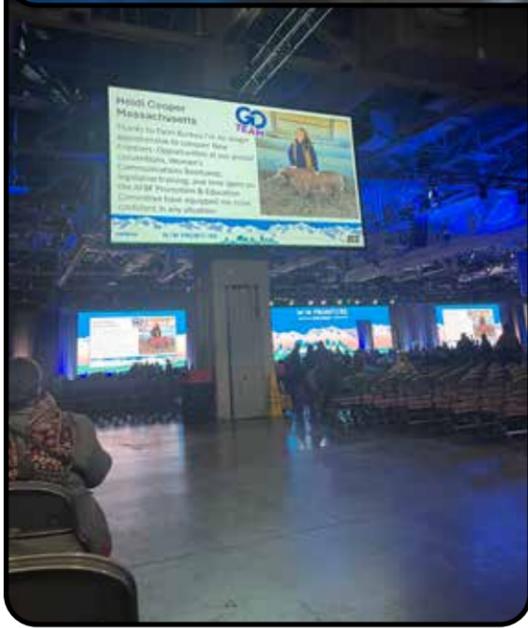
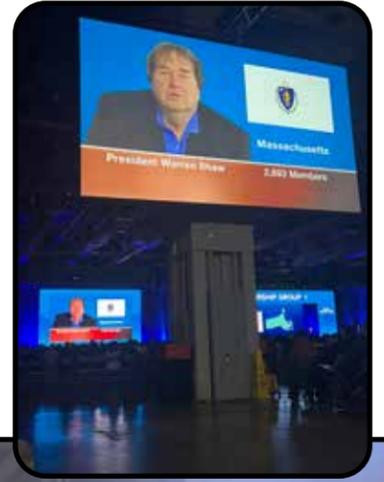
Greg Finn Scholarship Available for 2024

The Gregory L. Finn Scholarship was established by MFBF in loving memory of a good friend to agriculture. Greg was the Information & Public Relations Director for the Massachusetts Farm Bureau and a religious and devoted family man who died of a heart attack in 1983 at 55. Greg was well aware that a whole generation had grown up without exposure to perhaps the most vital industry in the Commonwealth—agriculture. This scholarship is being awarded in Greg's memory to foster an understanding and perhaps to help close the gap between the farm community and suburban Massachusetts.

Please scan code or follow link below for further details and the scholarship application:
<https://mfbf.net/resources/grants-and-scholarships>



AFBF's 2024 Annual Meeting Jan. 19-24, 2024 Salt Lake City, Utah



Governor & Lieutenant Governor File FY 2025 Budget

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“Recognizing our tightening fiscal environment, this budget responsibly controls spending and limits growths without jeopardizing the progress and impact we’ve been able to make over the past year working to make our education systems, tax code and housing more affordable for the people of Massachusetts,” said Secretary of Administration and Finance Matthew J. Gorkowicz. “We have been able identify and invest in critical areas like child care and public transit while also putting the state on a path toward sustainability.”

Fair Share

For just the second year, House 2 proposes to use revenue generated from the 4 percent Fair Share surtax on income above \$1 million to invest in education and transportation. The FY25 House 2 budget recommends \$1.3 billion for programs ranging from financial aid for public higher education to implementing low-income

fares at the MBTA – all focused on transformative investments for improving affordability, equity, and competitiveness across the state.

Notably, in education, House 2 proposes to use \$150 million to supplement spending in the operating budget to maintain \$475 million for C3 grants to support and stabilize the early education and care system. Another \$21 million for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Program will enable a \$38.6 million total FY25 investment to put the state on a path to universal Pre-K starting with all Gateway Cities by 2026. Fair Share funds will also support \$30 million for Literacy Launch to promote quality reading instruction for young learners and \$75 million to expand access to child care financial assistance for families up to 85 percent of the state median income.

In transportation, a new investment of \$250 million in the Commonwealth Transportation Fund will increase the borrowing

capacity of the CTF by \$1.1 billion over the next five year enabling the advancement of major infrastructure projects around the state. Fair Share spending will also support \$124 million in supplemental Chapter 90 spending to cities and towns to support maintenance of local roads and sidewalks, including \$24 million dedicated directly to rural communities. Another \$45 million would enable the MBTA to implement a low-income fare relief system wide, and \$15 million would go to support fare equity at Regional Transit Authorities.

Local Aid

The Healey-Driscoll Administration recognizes that the partnership between the state and its cities and towns is pivotal to building the communities in which people want to live, work, play, and stay.

The Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposal fully funds the fourth-year implementation of the SOA, dedicating \$6.86 billion to Chapter

70 education aid. This is a \$271 million, or 4 percent increase, over FY24. House 2 would guarantee a minimum aid increase of \$30 per pupil.

House 2 also proposes to fund Unrestricted General Government Aid at \$1.3 billion, a \$38 million, or 3 percent, increase over Fiscal Year 2024, and fully funds the Special Education Circuit Breaker at \$492.2 million. When combined with \$75 million of supplemental funding from the Fiscal Year 2023 close-out budget that will be available across Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025, \$567 million in total Special Education Circuit Breaker funding would be available to meet all projected district claims and this reflects the full phase-in of out-of-district transportation cost reimbursement provided for in the SOA.

This budget also recommends an increase of \$2.4 million, or 2 percent over Fiscal Year 2024, for regional school transportation

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reimbursements. Overall, Local Aid to cities and towns totals \$8.7 billion, a \$269.4 million, or 3 percent, increase, over Fiscal Year 2024.

Education

Early Education and Care

- \$475 million for Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grants to providers to stabilize the early education and care system
- \$20 million for provider rate increases above sustained FY24 increase
- \$38.6 million for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative
- \$5 million for early childhood mental health supports, with an additional \$5 million in Fair Share to be utilized across the Executive Office of Education
- \$10 million for career pathways program for early educators

Higher Education

- \$80 million to sustain the expansion of MASSGrant Plus and maintain FY24 financial aid expansion
- Covers tuition, fees, books, and supply costs for Pell Grant-eligible students and reduces out-of-pocket expenses for middle-income students (\$73 K to \$100 K AGI) by up to half
- \$24 million for MassReconnect, an increase of \$4 million
- \$24.9 million for mental health supports
- \$8.8 million for foster care financial aid and fee waiver programs to support over 1,400 Department of Children and Families eligible students attending private and public campuses
- \$14 million for the Community College SUCCESS fund
- \$125 million in Fair Share funding to support capital improvements across campuses, including lab and instructional facilities, infrastructure modernization, decarbonization, and critical repairs

Transportation

MassDOT

- \$588 million for MassDOT operations including Highway, RMV, Rail and Transit, and Aeronautics
- \$56 million for safety, service and sustainability programs

MBTA

- \$314 million in direct operating support, doubling the \$127

million in direct operating support in FY24 and maintaining \$60 million for pay-go capital; This is in addition to \$1.5 billion in projected sales tax revenue transfer

- \$45 million for the FY25 implementation of Low Income Fare Relief

Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)

- \$94 million for RTA base funding
- \$75 million in Fair Share funds to support operational improvements and expand access, including:
 - \$56 million for regional transit funding and grants
 - \$15 million for RTA fare equity programs
 - \$4 million for grants to expand mobility options

Economic Development

- \$7.5 million for Small Business Technical Assistance Grants
- Launches a new Entrepreneur-In-Residence Program to help keep international graduates of Massachusetts colleges and universities in the state upon graduation
- Builds a Reciprocity Ombudsperson Unit at the Division of Occupational Licensure to guide those seeking licensure from other jurisdictions through the process in Massachusetts
- Creates technical assistance support for the Business Front Door, which aims to transform the way businesses interact with state government
- Funds capacity at the executive office to take the lead on priorities such as siting and permitting, technical assistance for businesses, and "Climatech"
- \$10 million for the Massachusetts Life Science Center (MLSC)
- \$8.5 million for initiatives at the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative to support workforce, manufacturing, cybersecurity, and the innovation economy

Housing and Homelessness

- \$219 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), a 22 percent increase, to support over 10,000 voucher holders by the end of FY25
- \$112 million for subsidies for Local Housing Authorities, including an increase for local tenant organizations to match the federal rate (\$25/unit)
- \$16.5 million for the Rental Subsidy Program for DMH

clients, which will preserve 220 additional rental vouchers created in FY24

- \$197.4 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), preserving a maximum benefit of \$7,000 over 12 months
- \$57.3 million for HomeBASE, maintaining a benefit level of \$45,000 over 36 months to connect EA-eligible families with more permanent housing opportunities
- \$3 million for Housing Assistance for Re-Entry Transition, providing transitional housing and rental vouchers to support adults exiting incarceration
- \$325 million for Emergency Assistance Family Shelter (EA) program, with remaining need to be funded through accompanying supplemental budget

Climate and Environment

For the second year in a row, the Healey-Driscoll administration's FY25 budget would guarantee that climate and environmental programming through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs is funded at 1 percent of the overall budget – \$572.1 million. This represents a \$14.2 million, or 3 percent, increase over FY24, including \$5.6 million to establish new technical assistance programs for culverts, small bridges, and dams, as well as funding for a new carbon sequestration program.

- \$25 million to support Food Security Infrastructure Grants
- \$30 million for the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center to support workforce training programs in the clean energy industry, clean transportation adoption, and an energy retrofit pilot program
- \$4.8 million for a decarbonization clearinghouse (one-stop shop for energy efficiency, electrification, and storage)
- \$1.7 million for sampling at landfills and water facilities for PFAS
- \$1.5 million to expand air quality monitoring statewide
- \$1.5 million for climate and drought resilience through the Dept. of Environmental Protection

Labor and Workforce Development

- \$15.7 million for Summer Jobs Program for At-Risk Youth (Youthworks) to subsidize wages and facilitate career development of at-risk youth between the ages of 14 and 25

- \$10.4 million for Career Technical Institutes (CTIs), which aim to close skills training gaps by expanding access to vocational education, across EOL and Education
- \$10 million for MassHire Career Centers to provide regional workforce training and employee placement services across 29 locations
- \$3.8 million for the Registered Apprenticeship Program to fund approximately 1,000 placements for registered apprentices in FY25

Health and Human Services

- \$390 million for Chapter 257 provider rate increases benchmarked to the 53% of BLS salaries and \$249.9 million to annualize FY24 rate increases
- \$112.9 million for collective bargaining increases and \$75 M to support direct care staffing needs shifted from off-budget reserve
- \$90.3 million to support and Turning 22 classes
- \$44.2 million to meet projected need in TAFDC and EAEDC benefits
- \$17 million increase for behavioral health initiatives at DMH to expand inpatient and community capacity
- \$10 million for the development of intensive care program models for high-need youth
- \$5 million for reducing and eliminating copays for low-income Home Care clients at EOE
- \$4.9 million for certificate programs, recruitment bonuses, and expanded access to licensing to expand the CNA workforce
- \$3.1 million for postpartum care services for DCF clients with substance use disorders
- \$2.5 million to continue new home and community-based service programs to help DDS clients remain in their homes
- \$2.1 million for youth delinquency prevention through the Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program (MYDP) at DYS

MassHealth

MassHealth, the Commonwealth's Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), provides coverage of health care and related critical services to over 2 million members, including over 40 percent of Massachusetts children and over 60 percent of Massachusetts residents living in nursing facilities. MassHealth maintains affordable, equitable, comprehensive health care

Continued on Page 11

Federal Farm Bill Update

Continued from page 3

- Continuing to balance new farm operations with those existing farms, in both rural and urban areas.

Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation stands in strong support of American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF) efforts to urge Congress to pass a new Farm Bill.

The following link will take you to AFBF's Farm Bill Action Alert: <https://p2a.co/e8zclFI> or scan this QR code:

By filling out some basic information (name, address, etc.) you will be able to register your support for the farm bill with your respective Congressional officials.

You will be able to opt in or out of receiving texts and emails about this campaign.



FARMERS' GUIDE TO 2018 USDA FARM BILL PROGRAMS

This guide describes assistance for farmers, ranchers, and forest managers available through the 2018 Farm Bill.

To learn more, visit your local USDA Service Center or farmers.gov.

- Farm Service Agency (FSA)**
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**
- Risk Management Agency (RMA)**

FUND — Opportunities to access capital to fund your operation.	
Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)	Provides incentives that help farmers grow bioenergy feedstocks (crops well suited for conversion to energy) and connect with qualified biomass conversion facilities.
Down Payment Loans	Provide a low-interest Government loan, made in conjunction with a loan from a commercial lender and borrower down payment, to help beginning, minority, veteran, and women farmers purchase a farm or ranch.
Farm Operating Loans	Help producers pay for normal operating expenses, including machinery and equipment, seed, livestock feed, and more. Direct (up to \$400,000) and guaranteed (up to \$1.75 million) operating loans are available.
Farm Ownership Loans	Help producers become owner-operators of family farms as well as improve and expand current operations. Direct (up to \$600,000) and guaranteed (up to \$1.75 million) ownership loans are available.
Farm Storage Facility Loans	Provide low-interest loans to build, purchase, or upgrade facilities and equipment used to store, handle, or transport eligible commodities.
Marketing Assistance Loans	Provide interim financing at harvest time for producers to meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices typically are at harvest-time lows.
Microloans	Provide farm loans for annual operating expenses, equipment, livestock, and real estate tailored to small, beginning, underserved, and veteran farmers and diversified farming operations serving local markets. Farm Operating and Farm Ownership Loans of up to \$50,000 each are available.
Organic Certification Cost Share Assistance	Provides up to 75 percent of organic certification costs for producers, not to exceed \$750 per certification scope.
Youth Loans	Provide operating loans of up to \$5,000 to youth ages 10 to 20 to finance income-producing, agricultural projects that are developed and carried out through Future Farmers of America, Tribal youth organizations, or similar agricultural-affiliated groups.
MANAGE — Opportunities to mitigate risk on your operation.	
Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs	Protect farm revenue from changes in market conditions. Provides a safety net to farmers and ranchers when there is a substantial drop in revenue or prices for covered commodities.
Conservation Stewardship Program Grassland Conservation Initiative	Provides financial assistance to conserve grasslands through a single opportunity to enroll in a 5-year contract. Eligible lands are limited to cropland for which base acres have been maintained under FSA's ARC/PLC and were planted to grass or pasture, including idle or fallow, during a specific period. Enrolled acreage must be managed consistently with a grassland conservation plan.
Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC)	Replaces the Margin Protection Program for Dairy. Offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.
Federal Crop Insurance	Offers hundreds of different insurance products. Product offerings include coverage for production loss, revenue loss, and price decline. Insurance covers row crops, livestock, specialty crops, organics, dairy, grazing land, and more.
Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)	Provides financial assistance to producers of certain eligible crops for which catastrophic risk protection plan of insurance is not available when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to an eligible cause of loss.

CONSERVE — Opportunities to implement conservation on your operation.	
	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches through conservation easements.
	Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) Helps agricultural producers manage financial risk through diversification, marketing, or natural resource conservation practices. NRCS administers the conservation provisions while USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and RMA implement the production diversification and marketing provisions.
	Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Awards competitive grants that drive innovation and develop the tools, technologies, and strategies for next-generation conservation efforts on working lands. Grantees leverage the Federal investment through matching requirements. Through CIG's new On-Farm Trials, partners provide incentive payments to producers to offset the risk of implementing innovative approaches.
	Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Protects soil, water quality, and habitat by removing highly erodible or environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production through long-term rental agreements.
	CRP - Transition Incentives Program Encourages landowners to sell or lease long term to beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers willing to implement sustainable practices or transition to organic production by providing 2 years of additional payments for expiring CRP-enrolled land.
	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority natural resource concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.
	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits, such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.
	Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP) Helps landowners restore, enhance, and protect forestland resources on private lands through easements and financial assistance. Through HFRP, landowners promote the recovery of endangered or threatened species, improve plant and animal biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration.
	Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. Under partnership agreements, NRCS and its partners leverage and target their respective resources to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners to address priority natural resource concerns.
	Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) Provides State and Tribal governments with funding or incentives to expand or improve habitat in existing public access programs.
RECOVER — Opportunities to help your operation recover from a natural disaster.	
	Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish program (ELAP) Provides assistance to eligible owners of livestock, and producers of honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease (including cattle tick fever), adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by LFP and LIP.
	Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) Provides funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to restore farmland damaged by natural disasters and for emergency water conservation measures in severe droughts.
	Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) Provides funding to restore privately owned forests damaged by natural disasters.
	Emergency Loans Provide loans to help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding, other natural disasters, or quarantine.
	Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) Provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered grazing losses due to drought or fire on land that is native or improved pastureland with permanent vegetative cover or that is planted specifically for grazing.
	Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) Provides benefits to livestock owners for livestock deaths or injuries in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather or by attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the Federal Government or protected by Federal law. Benefits also are available for reduced sale prices for owned livestock due to injury caused by eligible loss conditions.
	Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Provides financial cost-share assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes, and vines damaged by or lost due to a natural disaster.

Dear News & Views Readers!



We are excited to announce that we now have a dedicated email address for you to submit news items, photos, or comments/ suggestions you'd like us to share with other members.

Please send them to **submissions@mfbf.net** (submissions will be approved/ edited at the discretion of MFBF). Thank you!

Allied Business Directory

Auto Shine Auto Body

310 Bedford St
Abington MA
Phone: 781-421-6042

531-549 Pond St
Braintree MA

Phone: 781-337-4309
Copeland Street Auto Body
65 Copeland St Quincy MA
Phone: 617 479-6352

Products & Services: We are offering 10% off any collision job for Farm Bureau Members! Specializing in Any Collision Job, We work with all insurances and handle all necessary arrangements for Your Convenience Free Estimate.

AVIV, LLC

115R S Main Street
Berkley, MA 02779
Eva Smith, Director of Operations,
Partner
Eva@aviv.life
www.aviv.life
774-231-8008

Products & Services: We are a farm based mental health practice that specializes in animal assisted psychotherapy. Our practice holds sessions outdoors and with equines or other farm animals.

Berkshire Agricultural Ventures

314 Main Street Suite#11
Great Barrington, MA, 01230
413-645-3594
glenn@berkshireagventures.org

Products & Services: Provides grants, loans, business and technical assistance to support local farms and food businesses in the Berkshire-Taconic region.

Blood Farm

94 West Main Street
West Groton, MA 01472
978-448-6669

Products & Services: We are a 7 generation, family run, slaughter and processing facility.

The Big E

1305 Memorial Ave
West Springfield, MA 01089
413-205-5011
https://www.thebige.com/p/
agriculture
info@thebige.com

Products & services: Fairgrounds and Annual Fair

BlueWave

116 Huntington Avenue, Suite 601
Boston, MA 02116
W: (413) 450-0190
M: (413) 824-2000
Sam Kitfield
skitfield@bluewave.energy
https://bluewave.energy/

Product & Services: BlueWave develops and owns dual-use agricultural solar projects to support local farms while generating clean energy for Massachusetts communities.

Colonial Restorations

PO Box 868
Fiskdale, MA 01518-0868
508-735-9900
http://www.cr1981.com
info@cr1981.com

Products & Services: Colonial Restorations, LLC specializes in the structural restoration/repair of post and beam homes and barns throughout New England since 1981.

Courtney Merrigan, Ag Real Estate

court.merrigan@gmail.com
308-672-6060

Products & Services: Specializing in buying and selling farms and land, equine and recreational property through expert marketing and tailored service.

Eastern Solar

Ken Nelson
P.O. Box 60
Wayland, MA 01778
508-882-0102
easternsolarservice.com
easternsolarservices@hotmail.com

Products & Services: Serving the solar industry for 40 years. Service, maintenance, training and repair of existing solar systems.

Essex County Greenbelt Association

82 Eastern Ave
Essex, MA 01929
978-768-7241
ecga@ecga.org
ecga.org

Products & Services: Greenbelt works with Essex County farmers and farmland owners to preserve farmland, while helping provide affordable and secure farmland access.

Greenfield Farmers Cooperative Exchange

269 High Street
Greenfield, MA 01301
413-773-9639
greenfieldfarmerscoop.com
Products & Services: Farm, Home, Garden and Pet Supplies, Nursery, Bulk Grain, Wood Pellets. Member Discount, Local Delivery

Harness / Horseman's Association of New England

POB 1811
Plainville, MA 02762
508-918-8852
www.hhane.com
president@hhane.com
Products & Services: We are a non-profit membership association for harness horsemen and women. We promote harness racing both in Massachusetts and nationally.

Higgins Powersports

140 Worcester Rd.
Barre, MA 01005
978-355-6343
www.higginspowersports.com
www.higginsenergy.com

Products and Services: LS Tractors

& implements, DR & Husqvarna power equipment, Polaris & Can-Am ATV's, UTV's, Woodmaster outdoor furnaces, Vermont Castings, Jotul and HearthStone stoves

M5 Landworks

1 Mathewson St
Plainville, MA 02762
508-510-2004
M5Landworks1@gmail.com

Products & Services: We specialize in undergrowth brush clearing/excavation. Give us a call for a free estimate!

The Mane Place

510 W Hartford Ave
Uxbridge, MA 01569-1384
508-278-7563
themanepace.com
linda@themanepace.com

Products & Services: The Mane Place offers Poulin grain, hay, shavings, barn supplies, horse supplies, pet food and supplies, apparel, saddles, tack and gifts in a friendly family-owned setting.

Massachusetts Nursery & Landscape Association

P.O. Box 387
Conway, MA 01341
413-369-4731
http://www.mnla.com/
mnlaoffice@aol.com

Products & Services: MNLA is a statewide association dedicated to advancing the interests of "green industry" professionals.

Merrimack Valley & Deerfield DOT Exams

Lawrence location - 833-683-6863,
S. Deerfield location - 413-453-4368
deerfield-dot-exams.square.
sitemerrimack-valley-dot-exams
maria@mvdotme.com

Products & Services: We provide DOT/CDL, merchant mariner and 7D school bus driver exams. We offer a 15% discount for multiple exams.

Monroe Tractor & Implement Co., Inc.

97 Turnpike Rd
Westborough, MA 01581
508-845-4343
www.monroetractor.com

Products & Services: Monroe Tractor sells and supports a full line of equipment from CASE Construction & CASE IH Tractors and other misc. farm equipment. Monroe Tractor prides itself on quality equipment, rental, parts and service support.

Otis Poultry Farm

1570 North Main Rd
Otis, MA 01253
413-269-4438
www.otispoultryfarm.com

Products & Services: Selections of chicken & turkey pies with & without vegetables in assorted sizes. They have a large selection of sheepskin slippers & sugarfree candy.

Pope Energy

Doug Pope
42 8th Street, #4413B
Boston, MA 02129
617-337-0199
doug.pope@popeenergy.com
Products & Services: ag solar development

Progressive Grower Inc.

81 Charlotte Furnace Road
West Wareham, MA 02576
508-273-7358
www.progressivegrower.com
Info@ProgressiveGrower.com
Products & Services: The company carries a full line of chemicals and fertilizers at competitive prices and an extensive stock of farm equipment, tools and clothing.

Resource Management, Inc.

1171 NH RT 175
Holderness, NH 03245
605-536-8900
www.rmirecycles.com
RMI@RMIrecycles.com
Product & Services: We provide responsive, innovative and high quality organic residuals and recycling services to address our customer interests and needs.

Rice Fruit Farms

757 Main St
Wilbraham, MA 01095
413-596-4002
www.ricefruitfarm.com
info@ricefruitfarm.com

Products & Services: bakery, fruits and vegetables, coffee, homemade ice cream, milk, eggs, local products, honey and olive oil.

SEMAP, Inc.

P.O. Box 80625
South Dartmouth, MA 02748
508-289-1814
www.semaponline.org

Products & Services: local food promotion, sustainable farming education and healthy food initiatives.

Soares Flower Garden Nursery

1021 Sandwich Rd
East Falmouth, MA 02536
508-548-5288
www.soaresflowergardennursery.com
soaresfgn@gmail.com

Products & Services: retail greenhouse featuring locally grown annuals, perennials, vegetables and herbs and shrubs, as well as a landscape design, build and maintenance firm.

World Farmers Inc.

769 Main St
Lancaster, MA 01523
978-706-7935
http://www.worldfarmers.org/
info@worldfarmers.org
Products & Services: education, beginning farmers and ranchers.

Inaugural Report From The MA Executive Office Of Energy & Environmental Affairs

The Healey-Driscoll Administration released the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) inaugural report highlighting key milestones and accomplishments by the agency in Governor Maura Healey's first year. This report showcases the outstanding work done by EEA organizations and partners to ensure that Massachusetts climate goals are achieved. The report describes the EEA officials' visits across the state and actions to identify and address climate-related goals, including but not limited to decarbonization, climate resilience, natural resource stewardship, and environmental and energy justice.

"The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs is on the frontlines of climate change, and its work has never been more important," said Governor Healey. "We were proud to invest in this agency in our first budget and even prouder to see the results. States are collaborating

like never before on energy issues, environmental justice communities have a seat in government, and so much more. I'm grateful to Secretary Tepper, our commissioners, and the over 3,000 hardworking staff that serve our residents."

"We've made important strides this year to address climate change," said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll. "In our first year alone, we've invested \$213 million in grants to help decarbonize our homes, protect open spaces, expand our tree canopy, and support our farmers. And we're just getting started."

"In the past year, Massachusetts faced numerous challenges, from record-breaking heat waves to devastating floods that damaged crops and served as a reminder of what is at stake in the clean energy transition," said EEA Secretary Rebecca Tepper. "Our inaugural report demonstrates the collective commitment and dedication

our organizations have towards addressing the climate crisis and protecting our communities. We're proud to present a summary of our work thus far, and we are looking forward to a new year of opportunities."

"This year, we adopted a whole-of-government approach to climate action, and you see that in the important work accomplished — strong collaboration among our agencies to secure unprecedented federal funding, the first statewide coastal resilience initiative, and much more," said Climate Chief Melissa Hoffer. "I'm grateful for Secretary Tepper's partnership and the hard work of her team, and I'm looking forward to another year of bold climate action."

Governor Healey's first operating budget elevated EEA to 1 percent of the overall budget, representing a significant investment in agencies tasked with combating climate change and protecting natural resources. The

administration also created several new offices and positions within EEA to advance the state's climate goals, including:

- Office of Environmental Justice & Equity
- Office of Federal & Regional Energy Affairs
- Office of Climate Science
- Office of Outdoor Recreation
- Undersecretary of Decarbonization & Resilience

The report also summarizes the impact of EEA's grants. In 2023, EEA awarded \$216 million to 1,813 individual grantees through initiatives like the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP), the Affordable Housing Deep Energy Retrofit Grant Program, and the Natural Disaster Recovery Program for Agriculture.

The report will be available online at www.mass.gov/eea and printed copies are available upon request.

Call For Grant Proposals To Advance Sustainable Agriculture

Two Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant programs are calling for 2024 proposals. Northeast SARE's Administrative Council has allocated \$750,000 for Partnership Grants and \$500,000 for Graduate

Student Research Grants.

Partnership Grants fund researchers, educators and agricultural service providers working in direct partnership with farmers in the Northeast. Funded projects will design and implement

innovative solutions to agricultural sustainability challenges, and strengthen connections between farmers and agricultural service providers.

Partnership Grant proposals are capped at \$30,000; about 30

projects will be awarded. Proposals are due April 9, 2024, 5:00 p.m. EST.

Graduate Student Research Grants fund students conducting research under the supervision of a faculty advisor on sustainable agriculture

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Governor & Lieutenant Governor File FY 2025 Budget

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coverage for members.

In Fiscal Year 2025, MassHealth will continue to ensure access to high-quality services while managing the loss of ~\$1 billion of annual federal revenue during the pandemic and significant health care cost growth over the past two years.

House 2 recommends \$20.3 billion gross/\$8.2 billion net for MassHealth, an increase of \$730 million gross/\$440 million net above estimated Fiscal Year 2024 spending. These growth figures assume the implementation of substantial savings initiatives, including enhanced program integrity efforts, additional federal revenue streams, and targeted reductions in spending.

Despite these fiscal headwinds, the budget proposal proposes investments that advance MassHealth's priorities, which are: (1) advancing health equity, (2) simplifying member experience

and improving customer service, (3) strengthening behavioral health and primary care, and (4) promoting member independence.

MassHealth targeted investments to improve access to care, include:

- ~\$70 million in targeted rate investments that address workforce challenges across community-based nursing and direct care workers.
- \$5 million to improve access to wheelchair repair services.
- ~\$60 million in rate investments in behavioral health, primary care and maternity care
- \$10 million of infrastructure funding for correctional partners in advance of implementing MassHealth coverage 90 days before release from jail or prison settings.

Public Safety

- \$35 million to enhance equity and eliminate barriers

to communication through implementing No Cost Calls across all correctional facilities, including those run by county sheriff departments

- \$16 million in operating budget savings through the closure of MCI Concord; Incarcerated individuals and staff members transferred to nearby facilities by July 1, 2024
- \$2 million for the State Police Cadet Program; \$10.3 million for 91st State Police Recruit Training Troop.
- \$5.6 million for State Police body-worn cameras for all sworn Troopers
- \$10.7 million to maintain support for reentry initiatives across DOC and EPS
- \$2 million to sustain the Safe Neighborhood Initiative

Serving Our Veterans

- Fully covers the cost of implementing the HERO Act
- \$4.3 million to increase Ch.115 annuity payments from \$2,000 to

\$2,250

- \$1.0 million revenue reduction to waive veteran license plate fees
- Maintains support for the Commonwealth's veterans and makes critical staffing and infrastructure investments at the Chelsea and Holyoke Soldiers' Homes
- Prepares for the opening of new Soldiers' Homes facilities.

Technology and Cybersecurity

- Creates the Digital Accessibility and Equity Governance Board, and the position of Chief IT Accessibility Officer (CIAO)
- \$600,000 to support the AskMA mass.gov chatbot
- \$4.2 million for technology modernization and hardware maintenance contracts
- \$700,000 for advanced threat protection software and other upgrades

Being A Farm Bureau Member Pays

MFBF Members Enjoy Discounts From National & Local Business Partners

Please visit www.MFBF.net for more information.

Get a 5% discount on your farm package with Countryway Insurance, and save 3%-5% off your personal auto with various companies! Your friendly A&B Insurance Group Agents offer a full line of insurance services to meet all your needs. Your knowledgeable and experienced agent can help arrange a program that will best meet your farm and personal insurance needs. With six farm carriers and eight personal lines carriers, your agent can tailor a program specifically for you or your family's needs. In addition to Farm Packages, we also offer personal & commercial auto, homeowners, property insurance, workman's compensation as well as health, life & disability insurances.



Visit the A&B's Website at www.abinsgroup.com 978-399-0025.

Massachusetts Farm Bureau members now receive a \$500 Bonus Cash offer from Ford Motor Company on a purchase or lease of a new qualifying vehicle. You must be a Farm Bureau member in Massachusetts for 30 consecutive days prior to purchase or lease.



Visit fordfarmbureauadvantage.com or LincolnFarmBureauAdvantage.com or see your authorized Ford or Lincoln Dealer for qualifications and complete details.

Ford Program Disclaimer:

Farm Bureau Bonus Cash is exclusively for active Farm Bureau members who are residents of the United States. This incentive is not available on Shelby GT350®, Shelby® GT350R, Mustang BULLITT, Ford GT, Focus RS and F-150 Raptor. This offer may not be used in conjunction with most other Ford Motor Company and Lincoln Motor Company private incentives or AXZD-Plans. Some customer and purchase eligibility restrictions apply. Must be a Farm Bureau member for 30 consecutive days prior to purchase and take new retail delivery from dealer.



Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation members can save up to \$2,750 on eligible Cat® machines. On top of that, members receive an additional \$250 credit on work tool attachments purchased with new Cat machines.

Visit <http://www.farmbureau.co/member-benefits/> for more information.

John Deere now offers GreenFleet Loyalty Rewards to members of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation. Farm Bureau members receive discounts, special low rate financing and all other benefits associated with GreenFleet Platinum 2 status.



It's easy to become a GreenFleet member too! Just sign up for John Deere GreenFleet Loyalty Rewards program using a valid member ID and zip code for membership verification and become a Platinum 2 level by visiting www.JohnDeere.com/FarmBureau.

MFBF members receive up to \$500 off Farmall, Maxxum and more! Visit <http://www.farmbureau.co/member-benefits/> and enter your membership ID number and zip code to print a certificate to use towards your next Case-IH purchase. Please print before heading to your local dealer.



Massachusetts Farm Bureau members save 20% off published at almost 5,000 Choice Hotels Worldwide! Save 20% off at participating Comfort Inn®, Comfort Suites®, Quality Inn®, Sleep Inn®, Clarion®, MainStay Suites®, Suburban Extended Stay®, Rodeway Inn® and Econo Lodge® hotels. Call 800.258.2847 and mention your Massachusetts Farm Bureau ID or go to choicehotels.com and enter your Massachusetts Farm Bureau ID to book online (*if you don't know the MFBF ID call our office today at 508-481-4766).



WYNDHAM HOTELS & RESORTS

Whether you are looking for an upscale hotel, an all-inclusive

resort or something more cost-effective, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has the right hotel for you! As a Massachusetts Farm Bureau member, you will save up to 20% off the Best Available Rate* at over 8,000 participating hotels worldwide. Discover the benefits of booking your vacation with Wyndham Hotels & Resorts as a Massachusetts Farm Bureau member. Our vast portfolio of hotels and resorts offer a variety of accommodations to meet your travel needs. Wherever people go, Wyndham will be there to welcome them.

To take advantage of this valuable travel discount rate, please call 877-670-7088 to connect with a dedicated travel expert and be sure to mention you are a Farm Bureau member or go to www.wyndhamhotels.com/farm-bureau to book.

McGovern Auto Group has partnered with MFBF to provide up to \$1,000 worth of incentives for members.



Growing up in the farming business, Matt McGovern learned the value of American ag and wants to give Massachusetts farmers an opportunity to save on one of the tools that keep their farms running.

Visit <https://www.mcgovernauto.com/mcgovern-farm-bureau-program.htm> for more info today!

Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University in North Grafton will apply a 10% discount to Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation regular members in good standing. Call: 508-839-7926



*Tufts University is a referral medical facility and should not replace your primary veterinarian service. This program is only for pre-qualified medical services provided at Tufts University's Large Animal Hospital when referred by your veterinarian.

MFBF members enjoy exclusive savings when renting from AVIS. Contact MFBF's office for savings code or log in to the members only website



Farm Bureau members also enjoy exclusive savings when renting from BUDGET. Contact MFBF's office for savings code or log in to the members only website



USDA Partners With Massachusetts To Award Over \$3 Million To Strengthen Food Supply Chain Infrastructure

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced it has a cooperative agreement with Massachusetts under the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI). Through this agreement, USDA and Massachusetts are working together to offer over \$3 million in competitive grant funding for projects designed to build resilience across the middle of the supply chain. Massachusetts is accepting applications for this Infrastructure Grant funding through March 29, 2024.

In May 2023, USDA announced the availability of up to \$420 million through RFSI to strengthen local and regional food systems. Through this program, AMS has entered into cooperative agreements with state agencies, commissions, or departments responsible for agriculture,

commercial food processing, seafood, or food system and distribution activities or commerce activities in states or U.S. territories. RFSI is authorized by the American Rescue Plan. Updates for each state's Request for Applications for the RFSI program are available on the AMS website.

"This partnership between USDA and Massachusetts is allowing critical funding to reach areas of the supply chain that need it most," said USDA Marketing and Regulatory Programs Under Secretary Jenny Lester Moffitt. "The projects funded through this program will create new opportunities for the region's small and midsize producers to thrive, expand access to nutritious food options, and increase supply chain resiliency."

Using RFSI funding, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)

will fund projects that expand or modernize capacity that have collaborative, regional impact on intermediaries within the middle-of-the-supply-chain including food hubs, aggregators, wholesalers, distributors, and shared processing facilities. The state's priorities are informed by stakeholder engagement and outreach to underserved producers to better understand their needs.

"We're thrilled to collaborate with USDA on this program that will further enhance and fortify our local food systems in Massachusetts," said MDAR Commissioner Ashley Randle. "The \$3 million in grant funding that the RFSI Program is allocating to the Commonwealth will allow our agricultural businesses and organizations to create more diverse local and regional market options and economic opportunities in our communities that will connect them to healthy,

nutritious food."

Those interested in receiving a subaward should apply directly through MDAR by March 29, 2024. AMS encourages applications that serve smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, underserved producers, veteran producers, and underserved communities.

Through the program and in addition to the Infrastructure Grant funding, MDAR will support supply chain coordination and technical assistance to farmers and food businesses operating in processing, aggregation and distribution—all critical activities to support access to more and better markets for farmers.

For more information, visit the AMS Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure webpage: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/rfsi>

Grant Proposals

Continued From Page 11

topics of importance to Northeast farmers, agricultural researchers, and farm support professionals.

Graduate Student Research Grant proposals are capped at \$15,000; about 30 projects will be awarded. Proposals are due April 16, 2024, 5:00 p.m. EST.

Northeast SARE – including funding decisions – is guided by its outcome statement:

"Northeast agricultural communities honor the holistic connection among land, water, air, and all living beings. Agriculture in the Northeast is accessible, sustainable, and just, addressing historic and current inequities so all farmers and farm employees can steward resources to ensure sustainability, resilience, economic viability, and a high quality of life."

Live question and answer sessions for both grant programs will take place throughout March and into April. These sessions are a great opportunity for potential applicants to learn if a Northeast SARE Grant is right for them. They are also a chance to build understanding around how to successfully write and manage Northeast SARE grants.

Partnership Grant Q&A sessions will take place March 5, 13, 19, and 27 from noon-1:00 p.m. EST. To register: <https://northeast.sare.org/2024PartnershipGrantQA>

Graduate Student Research Grant Q&A sessions will take place March 12, 20, 26, and April 3 from noon-1 p.m. ET To register: <https://northeast.sare.org/2024GraduateStudentGrantQA>

MFBF MEMBERSHIP FORM:

Name: _____
Farm Name: _____
Street: _____
Town: _____
State & ZIP: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____
Referred by: _____

I hereby apply for an annual membership in the (print your county) _____ County Farm Bureau and Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (which is a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation), whose purpose is to promote, protect, and represent the economic, social, and educational interests of Massachusetts farmers, as well as encourage the protection of agricultural areas and rural interest within the state. I am interested in promoting these objectives through membership. I understand acceptance or denial and classification of my membership are determined by the County Farm Bureau. Contributions, gifts, or membership dues to a County Farm Bureau or MFBF are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes; however, they may be tax-deductible under other provisions of the IRS code. Membership dues are non-refundable and non-returnable.

Please select membership level and make your check payable to MFBF; mail it with this form to 249 Lakeside Avenue, Marlborough, MA 01752. A service fee of \$15 will be assessed for returned checks. If preferred, you may pay with a credit card by calling us at 508-481-4766.

****NEW OPTION**** We are now offering the option to pay memberships in 12 equal monthly payments online (valid only for Farmer level and above). Please scan QR code below for details or follow this link: <https://mfbf.site-ym.com/>



MEMBERSHIP LEVELS/DUES:

VOTING MEMBERS ANNUAL DUES:

- Farmer Member: \$225**
Farmer members derive income from an agricultural commodity; they may vote on issues and sit on committees.
- Gold Club Member: \$350**
Gold members make a supplemental donation in support of agriculture; they may vote on issues and sit on committees.
- Platinum Club Member: \$500**
Platinum members provide financial support to MFBF at the highest level; they may vote on issues and sit on committees.

NON-VOTING MEMBERS ANNUAL DUES:

- Advocate - Individual Member: \$70**
Does not receive agricultural income. Eligible for affiliated member benefits.
- Advocate - Family Membership: \$100**
Does not receive agricultural income. Eligible for affiliated member benefits.
- Business Allied to Agriculture: \$225**
A business allied membership is for a company or service provider that is essential to agriculture.
 Business Allied: Please check here to be listed in our free directory that is distributed to all members.

COMMODITIES PRODUCED:

Please indicate which commodity areas best fit the product(s) you produce:

- Apiary
- Equine
- Fruits
- Horticulture
- Poultry
- Ag/Open Space Supporter
- Farm Stand/Farmers Market
- Other: _____
- Aquaculture
- Forestry
- Grain/Hay
- Livestock
- Vegetables

Thank you for your support!

Embracing New Frontiers

By: Zippy Duvall, AFBF President

We have just wrapped up our 105th American Farm Bureau Convention in Salt Lake City, and I am so grateful for the time we had as a Farm Bureau family to look to new frontiers in our organization and across agriculture. There's nothing like gathering, exploring innovative solutions, and tackling challenges together to energize us for the year ahead.

I felt that energy across our convention, from the trade show to our inspiring speakers to our robust policy discussions as we set priorities for the coming year. Farmers and ranchers are always looking to make each season better than the last, and the AFBF Convention helps us achieve that goal for our farms, our families and our communities.

Throughout the week, we hosted training opportunities and workshops to equip members and help them take their leadership and advocacy to the next level. We celebrated innovative and engaging programs from our county Farm Bureaus and recognized our outstanding Young Farmers and Ranchers through our competitive events.

One of my favorite parts of the convention is getting to walk the Trade Show floor and meet members from across our Farm Bureau family. The Trade Show is the place to be—and you could tell by the lines of folks just waiting for those doors to open each morning. It's also a place to give back, a value we share across our organization. This year, the Utah Farm Bureau organized the Miracle of Ag service project where event attendees helped to fill over 5,000 boxes of food for families facing hunger.

We kicked off convention by reigniting our advocacy on the Farm Bill. Farm Bureau led the way in 2023 calling for action, from working with groups across food, agriculture, conservation and nutrition to rallying our grassroots advocates. And thanks to those efforts, we did see a temporary extension to protect farm programs for now. While we are grateful for that extension and understand that Congress needs to address the budget, we also know that we cannot afford further delays when it comes to the farm bill. We are inviting folks to send a resounding message to Congress to deliver a new Farm Bill for our

farms and our country. The road to a new farm bill has become longer than any of us would have liked, but together we can see it through.

We were also honored to welcome Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack—a fellow Farm Bureau member—to our convention again this year. He met with all our state leaders to take our policy questions head on, and then he addressed all our attendees at our closing session. He is a humble leader and his commitment to agriculture shines through in his work. I am grateful for how our friendship has grown over the years.

The hallmark of our annual convention, however, is our voting delegate business session where our grassroots policy making process is in action. At Farm Bureau, our members establish our policies, which rise from the county level to our state conventions and on to the national stage. At our delegate meeting each year, we ensure our policy continues



Vincent "Zippy" Duvall, a poultry, cattle and hay producer from Georgia, is the 12th president of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

to reflect the views of farmers and ranchers across the country. We also saw this year that our delegates remain overwhelmingly family farmers who operate the full range of farm sizes, with almost two-thirds operating small and mid-sized farms. I look forward to taking these priorities back to Washington. This is how we continue to work towards new frontiers in agriculture. I am thankful for the hard work and dedication of our members and delegates as they set our direction for 2024, engage in their communities, and provide the leadership to ensure a bright future for agriculture.

I also want to take a moment to say a genuine thank you for the honor of being reelected as your American Farm Bureau President. It is a true privilege, and I look forward to continuing to serve you. As I mentioned in my keynote address, I see such a bright future for 2024, and I am excited to take on new frontiers together.

Zippy Duvall
AFBF President

American Farm Bureau Establishes 2024 Policies

Farmer and rancher delegates to the American Farm Bureau Federation's 105th Convention today adopted policies to guide the organization's work in 2024. Key topics ranged from artificial intelligence, to labor, to crop insurance.

For the second year, delegates were polled at the beginning of the voting session regarding their farms. The results show 99% of those who cast votes operate family farms and nearly two-thirds represent small to mid-size farms as defined by USDA.

"Today, delegates demonstrated their readiness to seize the opportunities and take on the challenges facing agriculture," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "It's crucial that Congress pass a new farm bill and address the labor shortage in 2024. The policy set forth by Farm Bureaus in all 50 states and Puerto Rico will guide AFBF in its efforts through the process. We look forward to making our members' unified voice heard as they work to ensure a strong food supply for America's families."

Today, delegates to the American Farm Bureau business meeting voted to create new policy to address the growth of artificial intelligence in agriculture. AI has the potential to enhance farming practices and conserve resources, but privacy rights must be

respected.

Recognizing the challenges of maintaining a strong agriculture workforce, delegates voted to stabilize wage rates for guest workers and revise H-2A and H-2B programs to better meet the needs of America's farms.

They reaffirmed their support for increasing reference prices in the farm bill and maintaining a strong crop insurance program, including an expansion of eligibility to ensure more commodities are covered.

On foreign investment, delegates added policy in support of additional funding to improve data collection on the foreign ownership of agricultural land. Delegates also voted to support the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S. reviewing foreign investments in U.S. agribusinesses, natural resources and real estate.

Delegates called for changes to the contract poultry pay system to ensure long-term economic sustainability for farmers, and to require more transparency from chicken companies.

On trade, delegates added policy to recommend Congress investigate fertilizer supply chain outages and tariffs placed on imports.

Beyond policy changes, AFBF

President Zippy Duvall and Vice President Scott VanderWal were unanimously re-elected for another two-year term.

Board of Directors

Delegates also elected members to serve on the AFBF board of directors and national program committees.

Brian Duncan, Illinois (Midwest Region); Allen Carter, New Jersey (Northeast Region); and Angela Bailey, Oregon (Western Region) were elected to fill one-year terms on the AFBF board of directors. Garrett Hawkins, Missouri (Midwest Region); Paul Larson, Connecticut (Northeast Region); and Eddie Melton, Kentucky, and Dan Wright, Arkansas (Southern Region) were elected to serve two-year terms. Nine other state Farm Bureau presidents were re-elected to two-year terms to represent their regions on the board: Carl Bednarski, Michigan (Midwest Region); Carlyle Currier, Colorado (Western Region); Chris Hoffman, Pennsylvania (Northeast Region); Mark McHargue, Nebraska (Midwest Region); Harry Ott, South Carolina (Southern Region); Jimmy Parnell, Alabama (Southern Region); Wayne Pryor, Virginia (Southern Region); Bryan Searle, Idaho (Western Region); and Jeb Smith, Florida (Southern Region).

National Program Committees

Mindy Orschell of Indiana (Midwest Region) was elected to a two-year term on the Women's Leadership Committee. Vickie Bryant of Kentucky (Southern Region), Jennifer Cross of Maryland (Northeast Region) and Dotty Jensen of Utah (Western Region) were re-elected to two-year terms. Alan Clark of Idaho was elected chair of the Promotion & Education Committee; Heidi Cooper of Massachusetts was elected vice chair. Both will serve one-year terms.

Kevin Lussier of Florida was elected chair of the Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee, taking over the position in March at the end of the AFBF Young Farmers & Ranchers Leadership Conference for a one-year term. Clarissa Cauthorn of Missouri was elected vice chair and Haily Sand of Wisconsin was elected secretary. They will each serve one-year terms.

AFBF appreciates the more than 80 speakers and more than 4,500 registered attendees who helped make the 2024 Convention such a success.

Planning for the American Farm Bureau's 2025 Convention has already begun. Mark your calendar to meet us Jan. 24-29, 2025, in San Antonio, Texas.

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ALL WE NEED IS YOU! 49.5 Acres available for lease or purchase.

The Town of Littleton, MA., is searching for a steward or stewards to bring a new agricultural vision and purpose and to think creatively outside the bounds of past uses. The 124.5-acre property includes 49.5 acres held in an agricultural preservation restriction by the State, a home, farm stand, cottage, two barns, and forested open space. To download the Request for Information, go to <https://www.littletonma.org/933/Nagog-Hill-Orchard-Ad-Hoc-Working-Group>. Deadline to apply March 1, 2024 5 PM EST. To learn more email questions to mailto:Orchard_Responses@littletonma.org. You must RSVP for the February site walk.

FOR SALE:

- Airblo oil cooled vacuum pump with water trap and oil cooling fan. used on 4,000 taps in 2022. \$1,200 or B.O. call for details. 413-530-5913
- LaPierre, single post RO with complete wash tank. Used in 2022. \$6,500 or BO. Call for details 413-530-5913.

FOR SALE: (Grafton, MA, 774-361-5464, text message)

- 2005 Jamco horse trailer, 3 horse slant, goose neck, large tack area in front, small moveable saddle and bridle section in back step, excellent condition, \$15,000 or b/o.
- 10 year old quarter horse gelding, 15'2", sound utd, Chestnut registered summer Indian dancer, great trail horse, safe, sane - easy horse, \$7,500.
- 10 year old standardbred gelding, 17'2" utd, Gorgeous grey, being ridden dressage, has been on hunter paces green but willing, gentle giant, no vices, easy horse, safe and sane, \$8,500.
- Downsizing farm - also various tack and blankets.

FOR SALE: (contact Doug at doug.stephan@gmail.com or 508-877-8700)

- Aluminum irrigation pipe, 40-foot lengths, \$100 per section.
- Electric motor for Irrigation pump, \$450.
- WOODCHUCK brand chipper,

takes up to 12-inch tree, Strong Ford Industrial engine, \$4,000.

- Farmall MTA, great running tractor, work it or collector tractor, \$4,900.
- Farm King Bale wrapper, like new, don't need. Great machine, \$12,000.

FOR SALE: Retiring, all types of farm and construction equipment. Call 508-523-3573 or email davidtombarelli@gmail.com for complete list. Bradford, MA.

FOR SALE: Hereford Calves for Sale: hand raised and tame, polled, both steers and Heifers, for your feed lot or pasture. 617-840-2074.

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