

HOUSE No. 3713

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Paul A. Schmid, III

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to promote healthy soils.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Paul A. Schmid, III	8th Bristol
Brian M. Ashe	2nd Hampden
Christine P. Barber	34th Middlesex
Antonio F. D. Cabral	13th Bristol
James M. Cantwell	4th Plymouth
Mike Connolly	26th Middlesex
Edward F. Coppinger	10th Suffolk
Cynthia Stone Creem	First Middlesex and Norfolk
Julian Cyr	Cape and Islands
Marjorie C. Decker	25th Middlesex
Carole A. Fiola	6th Bristol
Anne M. Gobi	Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire and Middlesex
Solomon Goldstein-Rose	3rd Hampshire
Kenneth I. Gordon	21st Middlesex
Jonathan Hecht	29th Middlesex
Natalie Higgins	4th Worcester
Stephen Kulik	1st Franklin
John J. Lawn, Jr.	10th Middlesex
Jason M. Lewis	Fifth Middlesex
David Paul Linsky	5th Middlesex
Jay D. Livingstone	8th Suffolk
Adrian Madaro	1st Suffolk
Paul W. Mark	2nd Berkshire
Paul McMurtry	11th Norfolk
James J. O'Day	14th Worcester
Elizabeth A. Poirier	14th Bristol
Denise Provost	27th Middlesex
Michael J. Rodrigues	First Bristol and Plymouth
Richard J. Ross	Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex
Byron Rushing	9th Suffolk
Alan Silvia	7th Bristol
Frank I. Smizik	15th Norfolk
Steven Ultrino	33rd Middlesex
Chris Walsh	6th Middlesex

HOUSE No. 3713

By Mr. Schmid of Westport, a petition (subject to Joint Rule 12) of Paul A. Schmid, III and others for legislation to establish a healthy soils program within the Department of Agricultural Resources to promote the use of regenerative agriculture. Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninetieth General Court
(2017-2018)

An Act to promote healthy soils.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 6C of chapter 20 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2014 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking, in line 3, the figure “17” and inserting in its place thereof the following figure:- 18

SECTION 2. Said section 6C of said chapter 20, as so appearing, is further amended by inserting in line 16 after the word “designee”, the following words:- ; 1 of whom shall be an expert in regenerative agriculture under chapter 128 appointed by the secretary of energy and environmental affairs

SECTION 3. Said Section 6C of said chapter 20, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after the word “foods”, in line 35, the following words:- ; especially those produced using regenerative agriculture under chapter 128.

SECTION 4. Said Section 6C of said chapter 20, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after the word “resources”, in line 42, the following words:- particularly through regenerative agriculture under chapter 128

SECTION 5. Section 7A of chapter 128, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the definition of “Garden” the following definition:-

“Regenerative agriculture”, agriculture that improves the health of soils, including but not limited to consideration of depth of topsoil horizons, water infiltration rate, organic carbon content, bulk density, biological activity, biological diversity, and bare ground, and as achieved through practices such as conservation tillage or no-till, cover-cropping, planned grazing, integrated crop-livestock systems, synthetic chemicals reduction, and other methodologies, and in consultation with the commission for conservation of soil, water and related resources established by chapter 21 section 19.

SECTION 6. Chapter 29, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after section 2VVVVV the following section:-

Section 2WWWW. (a) There shall be a fund to be known as the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Program Fund. The fund shall be administered by the department of agricultural resources. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, there shall be credited to the fund any revenue from appropriations or other money authorized by the general court and specifically designated to be credited to the fund and any gifts, grants, private contributions or investment income earned by the fund’s assets and all other sources. No expenditure from the fund shall cause the fund to be in deficiency at the close of the fiscal year. Money in the fund at the end of the fiscal year shall not revert to the General Fund and shall be available for expenditure in the subsequent year and shall not be subject to section 5C of chapter 29.

(b) Funds shall be expended to enhance the education, training, employment, income, productivity and retention of those working or aspiring to work in the field of regenerative agriculture, and in providing incentives for regenerative agriculture in the commonwealth. The department of agricultural resources, in consultation with the department of environmental protection and the commission for conservation of soil, water and related resources, shall establish, develop and implement the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Program in furtherance of this purpose. Amounts credited to the fund shall be used, without further appropriation, for the costs associated with administering and implementing the program and may also be used to provide grants or loans on a competitive basis to public, private and charitable entities to finance projects in furtherance of the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Program. Expenditures from the fund for this purpose shall complement and not replace existing local, state, private or federal funding for related training and educational programs.