

November 4, 2015

The Honorable Edward Markey
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Please Cosponsor S. 330, the Conservation Easement Incentive Act

Dear Senator Markey:

The Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition (MLTC) is a coalition of more than 120 land trusts and conservation organizations in Massachusetts that provides services to land trusts, landowners and communities to protect and care for the places that make Massachusetts special. MLTC, along with the Massachusetts land trust and conservation organizations from all across the state signed below, respectfully ask you to cosponsor S. 330, the Conservation Easement Incentive Act.

We thank you for your past support for legislation to make the conservation tax incentive permanent, as a co-sponsor of H.R. 1964 shortly before your election to the Senate, and you and your staff for meeting with us to discuss the bill earlier this year. **We urge you to co-sponsor S. 330 at your earliest convenience. Time is of the essence – this critical conservation tool expired at the end of 2014, and the lands we are losing are lost forever.**

The conservation tax incentive has strong, bipartisan support and has opened the door to voluntary, landowner-led conservation on millions of acres of important wildlife habitat, farmland, and scenic open space in across the country. Nationally, America's 1,700 land trusts and a diverse coalition of 65 national organizations – ranging from The Nature Conservancy, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Environmental Defense Fund to Trout Unlimited – support this bill.

Here in Massachusetts, the conservation tax incentive has helped protect thousands of acres, such as the recent conservation last year of 900 acres of highly productive farmland and forest in Leyden, Massachusetts. Almost a dozen landowners came together to form the Leyden Working Farms and Forest Conservation Partnership, and donated almost 50% of the aggregate value of their properties. Working with the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, the Franklin Land Trust, the Town of Leyden and the Commonwealth, many of these generous landowners were assisted in gifting collectively greater than \$ 700,000 of aggregate land value through use of the federal conservation tax incentive.

The conservation tax incentive bill will help Massachusetts landowners of more modest means choose conservation by allowing donors to deduct a larger portion of their adjusted gross income over a longer period of time. This will allow our farmers and forest owners to provide a conservation legacy that benefits us all.

From the forests of the Berkshires to the farms of the north shore and Connecticut River Valley to the beautiful seashore of Cape Cod, please cosponsor S. 330 to help landowners and land trusts in Massachusetts protect these landscapes you love. Please contact Sarah Shive in Senator Debbie Stabenow's (D-MI) office at 224-4822 to co-sponsor.

Sincerely,

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cc: Ana Unruh Cohen
Morgan Gray
John Phillips