



September 9, 2022

The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues, Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Ways & Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02110

The Honorable Aaron M. Michlewitz, House Chair
Joint Committee on Ways & Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Chair Rodrigues and Chair Michlewitz:

We are writing you and the members of the Conference Committee regarding *An Act relating to economic growth and relief in the Commonwealth* to respectfully urge you to include investments for nature and climate in the final legislation and to enact it as quickly as possible.

As you are aware, our organizations have focused our advocacy related to this bill on the disbursement of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for land conservation, outdoor recreation, and nature-based climate solutions. Given the historic underinvestment in nature and climate, the urgency associated with climate change, and the surging demand for quality outdoor spaces, we respectfully request the Committee prioritize appropriations in these areas, as reflected by both the House and Senate.

Specifically, we were thrilled to see both House and Senate economic development bills (H.5034 and S.3030) propose to invest significant funds in open space and ecological restoration (line item 1599-6075, through which the House allots \$175 million and the Senate allots \$125 million). We hope the Conference Committee will fund this line item at the highest possible level. We also strongly support the House bill's investment of an additional \$125 million in open space and recreation in environmental justice communities (line item 1599-6076), the Senate's prioritization of climate mitigation measures (line items 1599-6081, 1599-6082, and others), and funding for the Clean Water Trust Fund (1599-6079, funded at \$150 million in the Senate and \$100 million in the House). We hope that with the substantive overlap between the climate and environment funding in the House and Senate bills, the members will easily come to an agreement on these, and other, important spending priorities.

We appreciate that the conversation around tax revenues is difficult and raises complex issues not initially contemplated by this bill. However, there is high level of consensus on environmental and climate investments, and the urgency for these remains high.

Moreover, since the bills in both chambers used non-state revenue as a significant funding source, we hope that the committee can come to a quick agreement.

Please contact Linda Orel with the Trustees (lorel@thetrustees.org) or Emily Myron with The Nature Conservancy (emily.myron@tnc.org) with questions. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure a green and just recovery for the Commonwealth. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda Orel
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