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April 15, 2025

Joint Committee on Revenue

24 Beacon St, Room 34

Boston, MA 02133

via email: JointCommittee.Revenue@malegislature.gov

*Re: S.11/H.71: Proposal for a legislative amendment to the Constitution
relative to agricultural and horticultural lands (in support)*

Dear Chairs Madaro and Eldridge, and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to write in support of S.11 /H.71, which would amend the State Constitution to equitably support all farms by removing the five-acre minimum to qualify for the agricultural tax rate, and instead require that farmland be in production for two years to qualify.

The Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition (MLTC) works to advance land protection in Massachusetts by supporting and strengthening 140 non-profit land trusts that conserve land for the benefit of all Commonwealth residents. Every year, our member land trusts work closely with landowners, farmers and municipalities to conserve properties that are critical to the Commonwealth's farm economy.

Massachusetts lost 27,000 acres of farm land between 2017 and 2022, according to the USDA Census of Agriculture. At the same time, the increasing cost of farmland, at almost \$14,000 an acre, has resulted in the exclusion of many – particularly farmers of color and young farmers – from being able to afford even small parcels, particularly without the benefit of tax relief. The need for local agriculture will continue, and this change to the state constitution is one significant way the state can provide real relief to farmers, level the playing field for new and beginning farmers and – most importantly -- slow the permanent conversion of critical farmland to other uses.

We respectfully request your support of this legislation as it moves through the constitutional amendment process. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robb Johnson
Executive Director