

HOUSE No. 4228

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, December 26, 2023.

The committee on Agriculture to whom were referred the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 753) of Natalie M. Blais and others for legislation relative to agricultural disaster relief, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 4228) ought to pass.

For the committee,

PAUL A. SCHMID, III.

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)**

An Act relative to agricultural disaster relief.

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

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 29 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
2 section 2AAAAAA the following section:-

3 Section 2BBBBBB. There shall be a fund to be known as the Massachusetts Agricultural
4 Disaster Relief Fund. The money in this fund shall be expended to assist farmers in the
5 commonwealth who have suffered agricultural losses, financial losses, or property damage
6 caused by an event of force majeure.

7 The Massachusetts Agriculture Relief Fund may receive money from: (i) gifts, grants and
8 donations from public or private sources; (ii) federal reimbursements and grants-in-aid (iii) any
9 appropriations authorized by the general court specifically designated to be credited to the fund;
10 and (iv) any interest earned from the fund. The state treasurer shall be the custodian of the fund
11 and shall receive, deposit and invest all money transmitted under this section to ensure the
12 highest interest rate available consistent with the safety of the fund. The books and records of the
13 fund shall be subject to an annual audit by the state auditor. The department of agricultural

14 resources may expend money in the fund and no expenditure from the fund shall cause it to be in
15 deficiency at the close of a fiscal year. The commissioner of agricultural resources shall report
16 annually to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on
17 environment, natural resources and agriculture on income received into the fund and sources of
18 that income, any expenditure from the fund and the purpose of that expenditure and the fund's
19 balance. Money in the fund at the end of the fiscal year shall not revert to the General Fund and
20 shall be available for expenditure in the subsequent year and shall not be subject to section 5C of
21 chapter 29.