



MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

Every physician matters, each patient counts.

TESTIMONY REGARDING PLANT-BASED PROTEIN BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION May 5, 2025

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) is a professional association of over 24,000 physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and practice settings. The MMS is committed to advocating on behalf of patients for a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them to provide the best care possible. Many chronic diseases, including certain cancers, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, are strongly associated with unhealthy eating patterns. The MMS supports making healthy foods that are part of a balanced, plant-predominant diet more equitably accessible and affordable. **The MMS would like to be recorded in support of S.922, *An Act relative to the Bean New Deal*.**

S.922 seeks to integrate plant-based protein sources across public sectors in Massachusetts to promote their health, environmental, and climate benefits. The legislation mandates that all dining facilities at state agencies and public higher education institutions provide plant-based protein options at every meal. The bill furthers education on the benefits of plant-based protein by requiring culinary arts and vocation education programs to incorporate training on plant-based nutrition into their curriculum. Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program would be eligible for voluntary, annual plant-based nutrition training with a focus on encouraging plant-based meal initiatives through prioritized grant applications. Finally, the bill would require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to revise the Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework to include plant-based diet standards by 2027.

In addition to the health benefits, plant-based diets are cost effective. Plant-based diets, particularly eating beans, legumes, and whole grains cost less than a diet reliant upon meat. Total food costs have been shown to be about 19% lower on a vegan diet compared to an omnivore diet and 25% lower than a Mediterranean diet.

An additional benefit of promoting plant-based proteins is the role they can play in mitigating climate change and protecting our environment. Animal agriculture is a key driver of climate change, with environmental harms including widespread deforestation for grazing animals, fertilizer and pesticide production for feed crops, processing methods, transportation, and the handling of animal waste. Beef production releases 160 times more greenhouse gas emissions compared to a similar amount of beans or legumes. Poultry, by comparison, while less environmentally impactful, still produces approximately 30 times more greenhouse gas emissions than beans or legumes. Animal agriculture requires intensive use of land and water resources, using far more land and water per gram or per pound of meat produced as compared to legumes; beef uses ten times as much water per pound as chicken and chicken uses seven times as much



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per pound as legumes. The calculations estimate as much as 2,500 gallons of water is used to produce a pound of beef.

The health, cost and environmental benefits of plant-based diets are well worth promoting and S.922 represents an important step in raising awareness and increasing access to plant-based proteins. **We therefore ask the Committee to report Senate bill 922 out favorably.** Thank you very much for your consideration of these important issues. We appreciate the opportunity to offer these comments.