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PRESS RELEASE

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Gobi and Schmid Announce Environmental Initiatives Maintained in State Budget

BOSTON- Massachusetts lawmakers enacted a \$39.15 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) last week that prioritizes environmental initiatives, including funding for local agricultural programs and natural resource preservation.

Joint Chairs of the Committee on the Environmental, Natural Resources and Agriculture **Senator Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer)** and **Representative Paul A. Schmid (D-Westport)** advocated for increased funding for environmental agencies and programs throughout the budget process this session.

Highlights include funding for important programs such as Farm to School and Buy Local efforts, which increase access and availability to health, locally grown foods in schools and other institutions. Senator Gobi advocated for Buy Local efforts during Senate debate and was successful in passing an amendment for the funding of the program. Also included is a \$90,000 appropriation for the apiary inspection program which helps protect the honey-bee industry and significantly benefits our fruit and vegetable industries.

“This budget reflects a commitment to protecting the environment and promoting agriculture throughout the state,” said Schmid. “I am proud that programs focusing on local, healthy foods continue to be prioritized by the Legislature.”

"Local agriculture and the protection of our natural resources continue to be a priority and this budget reflects a shared vision to continue to enhance and move important programs and initiatives forward that benefit all," said Gobi.

The budget also establishes a new commission, the Farmland Protection and Farm Viability Advisory Commission that will create a Farmland Action plan to set the Commonwealth's goals, priorities, and actions for farmland protection and access. Amongst other things, this Commission will do a review of the

Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program and an analysis of farmland enrolled in the Chapter 61A Program.

The Governor has ten days to veto or change language and sections of the budget.

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