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PRESS RELEASE

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Gobi Attends Second Meeting of Agritourism Commission

BOSTON- Senator Anne Gobi (D-Spencer) attended the second meeting of the Massachusetts Agricultural Tourism Study Commission yesterday- established under a 2018 law to study opportunities that support, expand, and enhance agricultural tourism in the commonwealth.

Senator Gobi has served as Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture for the last six years, a position she also held for 4 years while serving in the House. She had this to say on the commission, and the potential for more growth in this area, “It is an honor to serve on this commission and to explore additional ways we can assist and generate revenue for our local farms and businesses. With more people staying close to home they are discovering the wonderful products and experiences our farms and farmers provide. Now, more than ever, we must do all we can to support existing agritourism and assist in expanding it.”

Agritourism is defined as a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural products and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors onto a farm or other agricultural businesses, educating and entertaining visitors while generating additional income for the farm and business owner. In Massachusetts, agritourism encompasses many activities and programming for a wide consumer audience including Pick Your Own (PYO) operations, petting zoos, hay rides, corn mazes, farm stands, retail stores with local produce and ready-made value added items for sale, hosting farm-to-table meals, weddings and birthday parties, field trips and farm stays (similar to a Bed and Breakfast). Popular events in central Massachusetts include the Asparagus Festival in West Brookfield and Hadley, and the Garlic Festival in Orange.

There are 240 farms participating in agritourism in the Commonwealth, creating \$13,476,000 in income for MA residents and businesses. While Massachusetts is currently ranked 8th in the country for agritourism value per farm, at an average income of \$56,150, the number of farms

participating has decreased by nearly 17% since 2012. Chaired by Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources Commissioner John Lebeaux, the commission will conduct a thorough review of the state and municipal laws and regulations relative to agricultural zoning, as well as the policies and grant programs offered by the department of agricultural resources. They will also examine national best practices to implement agricultural tourism.

For more information on the agrritourism in the Commonwealth, please visit <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/agritourism-farms>.

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