



Testimony submitted to the Senate Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets

**In support of H.3997 An Act relative to GreenWorks
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts enthusiastically supports H.3997, An Act relative to GreenWorks, and welcomes this demonstration of strong leadership from the House. GreenWorks will provide municipalities with much needed funding to build resiliency as protection against the impacts of climate change, impacts that we are already experiencing as significant losses to property, the economy, public health and the disruption of lives. This bill complements strong climate change bills pending in the House and Senate or already passed by the Senate.

The latest science makes it clear that climate change is happening at an accelerated and exponential rate and at great cost to our society and national security. As a coastal city, Boston is ranked the 8th most vulnerable to floods¹ out of 136 coastal cities. A 2016 report commissioned by the City of Boston² concludes that sea level will rise by 8 inches by 2030. The Boston report also notes half of Boston is built on land fill, making critical infrastructure such as Logan Airport and commercial wharfs, and housing from the luxury commercial and apartment complexes in the Seaport Area to low-income neighborhoods particularly at risk. And the risks spread well beyond Boston³ across the entire state, impacting livelihoods, infrastructure, agriculture and public health as climate change advances. These reports underscore the reality that, while greenhouse gases are global, the climate change impacts they cause are specific and local.⁴

It is particularly important to note that, in his February 2019 announcement of the GreenWorks proposal, Speaker DeLeo said GreenWorks is “not meant to supplant any other ideas that are out there.” There is no “silver bullet” to fully address climate change.

¹ Which Coastal Cities Are at Highest Risk of Damaging Floods? New Study Crunches the Numbers. The World Bank, August 19, 2013: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/08/19/coastal-cities-at-highest-risk-floods>. Accessed: 2.23.2020.

² Climate Ready Boston: December 2016: https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/embed/2/20161207_climate_ready_boston_digital2.pdf. Accessed: 2.23.2020.

³ Massachusetts State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan. September 2018: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/10/26/SHMCAP-September2018-Full-Plan-web.pdf>. Accessed: 2.23.2020.

⁴ Boston harbor brings ashore a new enemy: Rising seas: Steven Mufson, Washington Post, February 19, 2020: https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/embed/2/20161207_climate_ready_boston_digital2.pdf. Accessed: 2.23.2020.



As written, H.3997 provides a mechanism for funding mitigation, resilience and adaptation measures at the municipal level, with a strong tilt toward funding for adaptation. While there is no doubt that adaptation measures are needed, they can be compared to an ambulance at an automobile race, necessary but not sufficient to deal with the climate crisis. We need a strong plan focused on mitigation, the closest we can come to prevention in the age of climate change.

In addition to the vital funding GreenWorks will provide, the need for a roadmap, with clear goals to guide and help us assess our efforts so that funds are directed to the most effective measures, is of paramount importance. Massachusetts needs a plan that is flexible enough to allow for specific needs within communities plus the ability to adjust course to meet changing needs and technologies. We need the synergy and concentrated power of communities and regions working together so the whole of this work is greater than the sum of its parts.

Job One is addressing climate change to protect the health and well-being of our society and the ecosystem that supports our survival. GreenWorks provides much-needed funding to do a critical part of that work. Other bills in the House and pending or passed by the Senate provide necessary guideposts and policies to maintain a laser focus on strategic goals around emissions reductions and resiliency. We are at an “all hands on deck” moment. Strong bills from both the House and Senate this session offer a perfect and timely opportunity for bi-partisan, bi-cameral leadership and collaboration.

At this very late stage in the deadly warming of our earth—a process that cannot be reversed, only stemmed—what is desperately needed are the strongest possible preventative measures to bring down emissions plus efforts to strengthen infrastructure and resilience to reduce the severity of the impact.

Children around the globe are taking to the streets because they care about this issue. We cannot and should not expect our children to clean up our mess. We need to join them in this fight as the only responsible and right thing to do. Supporting the GreenWorks bill and strong climate change bills filed in the House and the Senate is a step the legislature must take this session. The cost of acting quickly, thoughtfully and responsibly pales in comparison to the cost of inaction.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, representing 47 local leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, urges this committee to report H.3997 favorably so it can be acted on this session.