

Fred Beddall Testimony in support of S2596 before the Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy Joint Committee, January 11, 2022

My name is Fred Beddall and I am a full time commercial farmer. My farm is in the Northampton Meadows near the Connecticut River.

I am speaking in strong support of S2596. This bill affirms the rights of towns in the Commonwealth to reasonably regulate industrial solar development, including for the purpose of protecting agricultural resources.

The City of Northampton currently has restrictions on large scale solar in the Meadows, a floodplain special conservancy. The farmers of Northampton, represented by our City's Ag Commission, support this zoning bylaw.

I'd like to speak to the idea of "reasonableness." It's hardly reasonable to convert our best farm soils to solar. Not when we already import 95% of our food in New England on carbon spewing diesel trucks.

It is reasonable to safeguard our food growing capability in the face of droughts and floods. It is reasonable to defend soils that can grow 10 foot tall corn in dry years and in rainy years.

It is also reasonable to conserve floodplain farmland which is nationally significant winter habitat for migratory birds.

Massachusetts is proud of our nearly 400 year tradition of town meeting style democracy. We should also be proud of farmland in the Northampton Meadows which has been farmed continuously for 1000 years and still grows some of the same crops.