



## Massachusetts Maple Producers Association

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Monday, November 6, 2017

Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon St.  
Rooms 213-B & 22  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Timilty and Chairwoman Benson:

Thank you for your consideration of H3735, An Act Providing for the Annual Observance of the Month of March as Massachusetts Maple Month and Designating Pure Massachusetts Maple Syrup as the Official Sweetener of the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts Maple Producers Association, a trade association representing more than 250 maple syrup producers, supports this bill and urges its passage.

Observing March as Massachusetts Maple Month will help bring attention to the work and products of Massachusetts sugarmakers, and encourage celebration of the first agricultural crop of the new year. For hundreds of years in Massachusetts, steam rising from sugarhouses has been one of the first signs of spring, calling people to participate in the harvest and enjoy the sweet products made by their neighbors. Today, more than 250 maple producers around the state are hard at work during the sugaring season, welcoming their neighbors to help collect sap, observe the boiling process, or enjoy a pancake breakfast at one of the several dozen sugarhouse restaurants run by sugarmakers. The legislature's recognition of this important time of year for our industry would attract more visitors and customers, helping to preserve the tradition of sugaring and helping to keep hundreds of farms viable.

Designating maple syrup to be the official sweetener of the Commonwealth acknowledges the historic, cultural, and economic significance of maple syrup in Massachusetts. Maple syrup can only be made where there are sugar maple trees, and Massachusetts is right in the heart of the only region in the world where maple syrup is produced, northeastern North America. Native Americans introduced maple sap and syrup to early European settlers, and it quickly became an important part of trade and helped the colonists remain independent of the more expensive 'slave sugar' grown on plantations and imported from the Indies. Today, more than 250 Massachusetts sugarmakers produce and sell in excess of \$10 million of pure maple products each year, and generate millions of dollars of additional revenue through agritourism and related businesses, such as the many sugarhouse restaurants that offer pancake breakfasts to customers during the sugaring season.

Massachusetts sugarmakers steward tens of thousands of acres of woodland in Massachusetts, managing their forests with sustainable management practices so that residents of the state can enjoy their natural beauty and environmental benefits for generations to come. Many

sugarmakers rely on their maple crop to support other agricultural endeavors, such as crop or dairy farming. Massachusetts sugarmakers consistently win awards for their high-quality pure maple products.

Demand for maple products has grown in recent years, as consumers seek out natural, healthy sweeteners and are becoming more aware of the versatility of maple syrup, which can be used in everything from baked goods to salad dressings to cocktails. Consumers also recognize the benefit to farmers and the local economy when they purchase maple products directly from local producers, and this bill will help to further build awareness of these connections and further grow the industry.

With the 2018 maple sugaring season approaching soon, we would appreciate the committee's consideration in passing H3735 in time for it to be announced during our events in March.

Thank you for considering this legislation, and for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'W' followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Winton Pitcoff, Coordinator