

April 10, 2015

Dear Senator:

Members of the environmental advocacy community are deeply concerned about the potential repercussions of HB3189 *An Act providing for an employee retirement incentive program.*

Agencies such as the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) have already been cut substantially in recent years, 19% and 8% respectively compared to FY2009. These budget cuts have resulted in significant staff reductions, which negatively impact the people and companies of Massachusetts.

- DCR's full-time equivalent (FTE) count is currently approximately 965, a 25% cut compared to 2008. Fewer staff has meant reduced capacity to maintain facilities and conduct programs and compromises safety and stewardship. Our forests, parks and beaches should be a hallmark for Massachusetts. Instead, these ongoing staff reductions hinder the ability of Commonwealth residents and visitors alike to enjoy these amazing assets, resulting in park closures and reduced hours at state pools and rinks.
- DEP's FTE count is currently 20% lower than in FY2009. This reduction has translated into longer wait times for permits, decreased outreach to the public and businesses, reduced enforcement of state laws, and failure to meet federal requirements.

The retirement incentive program would make a bad situation worse. Agencies like DCR and DEP would lose hundreds of experienced employees this year. As longtime employees opt into the retirement incentive program, the agencies will experience substantial loss of institutional knowledge. It is anticipated that the incentive program will triple the number of DCR employees retiring this year to 120, shrinking its workforce 35% compared to 2008.

It is not reasonable to assert that the retirement incentive program will allow these agencies to carry on without disruption in service. Without adequate staffing, we cannot expect our environmental agencies to effectively fulfill their broad missions. We can't do more with less-- we only do less with less. What will go undone? Will it be issuing permits in a timely fashion? Cleaning up hazardous waste spills? Ensuring that our drinking water is clean? Having lifeguards at our pools? Working with farmers so they can stay in business? Preparing us for floods and droughts? Or some other important function?

For our public health, our economy, our quality of life, and the protection of our natural resources for future generations, it is imperative that state leaders take a long-term view. As you consider the retirement incentive program, we urge you to ensure that the agencies retain the staff they need to carry out their mandates.

Thank you for your consideration.

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