

Promoting Effective Drought Management

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Gianna Bruno (left) and Amelia Chen

An Act relative to maintaining adequate water supplies through effective drought management seeks to solve the issues of the patchwork drought management plan by unifying Massachusetts under one management system. When a drought is declared, water conservation efforts will be uniform throughout the state. It is important to note that this bill will only require water conservation methods relating to non-essential outdoor watering, for example, limiting one from watering the lawn just to keep it green. All essential uses such as business, agriculture, or indoor water use will not be affected by the bill. One legal change the bill will introduce besides a uniform system will be that citizens who have their own private water source, such as a well, will be subject to the same outdoor water conservation procedures that other citizens will be following. This is an important addition because those with wells are still pulling water from the same larger water sources that any other citizen would be using, therefore, the bill requires uniformity across the state, not just from some citizens. Proper water conservation is essential now more than ever because of the intensity and long lasting nature of the droughts currently affecting the Commonwealth due to climate change.

■ The Bill

H.861/S.475: An Act relative to maintaining adequate water supplies through effective drought management

■ Elevator Speech

Good morning. Our names are Gianna Bruno and Amelia Chen and we are residents of Massachusetts as well as advocates for the Drought Bill. Last year, Massachusetts experienced a statewide drought, and climate change will only increase the number and severity of the droughts the state will experience.

What is needed now are water conservation policies regarding non-essential outdoor watering that will ensure that the state will always be able to have water for essential purposes such as general household use, irrigation for farmers, and business needs.

However, right now Massachusetts has a fragmented drought policy, and each town in a region decides its own water conservation requirements. For example, neighboring towns that use water from the same water source are not required to follow the same drought policies, so one town may strictly enforce a ban on watering one's lawn, while the other town does not, thus creating no positive impact on the already struggling basin.

The Drought Bill would give the drought management task force the authority to require water conservation methods across the region during a drought without having to wait for the governor to declare a drought emergency. The state will therefore be proactive in saving water during droughts by standardizing conservation across regions rather than town by town: one responsible plan for all communities.

We sincerely hope you hold a hearing for the Drought Bill as soon as possible.