

ASSEMBLY AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO
ASSEMBLY, No. 4634

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 22, 2022

The Assembly Agriculture and Food Security Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 4634.

As amended by the committee, this bill would provide for each county board of agriculture, not more than 180 days after the bill's effective date, to establish a two-year summer internship pilot program to provide working interns to farms in the State. Each county board of agriculture would be required to develop application, selection, stipend distribution, and evaluation processes, consistent with the bill's provisions, in order to implement the pilot program in the respective county.

In order to be eligible to participate as a summer intern in a farming internship pilot program established under the bill, a person would need to: (1) be a student at a high school, vocational school, or institution of higher education, including a graduate student; (2) submit an application to the appropriate county board of agriculture, in a form and manner prescribed by the board; and (3) enter into a written agreement with the county board of agriculture and an internship provider approved pursuant to the bill, which specifies the terms and conditions of the internship pilot program and describes the content of the lesson plan developed by the county board of agriculture.

In order to be eligible to participate as a farming internship provider in a county-level pilot program established under the bill, the owner of a farm would be required to: (1) submit an application to the appropriate county board of agriculture, in a form and manner prescribed by the board; (2) agree not to receive any financial or other compensation, other than the labor of the intern, for participating as an internship provider in the county's pilot program; and (3) enter into a written agreement with the county board of agriculture and an intern approved pursuant to the bill, which specifies the terms and conditions of the internship and describes the content of the lesson plan developed by the county board of agriculture.

The bill would require a county board of agriculture to approve or reject applications submitted for the bill's purposes, and to assign approved interns to work for approved internship providers. A

farming internship provider would be authorized to host up to 10 approved interns, from May through September, in each year of the two-year pilot program term.

The bill would appropriate \$2.1 million from the General Fund to the Department of Agriculture to fund the county-level pilot programs being established by the bill. The bill would require the department to distribute the funds to county boards of agriculture in order to fund the internship pilot programs being established and implemented pursuant to the bill, and it would further require the department to distribute those funds in a non-competitive manner, in proportion to the expected number of interns in each county. Up to five percent of the funds would be authorized to be used by the county boards of agriculture for administration costs.

Not later than six months after the completion of the two-year county pilot programs, the department would be required to submit a report, to the Governor and Legislature, on all the pilot programs operating pursuant to the bill. The report is to include an account of all State funds distributed pursuant to the bill, a summary of the pilot program implemented by each county board of agriculture, and an assessment of the success of the pilot programs in cultivating an interest in agriculture among students in the State.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

(1) require county boards of agriculture to establish their pilot programs not more than 180 days after the bill's effective date, in order to facilitate the contemporaneous operation of such programs in the State and the ability of the Department of Agriculture to timely report on the success of all such programs, as required by the bill;

(2) clarify that the bill provides for the establishment of multiple county-level pilot programs, one in each county, rather than providing for the establishment of a single, overarching State-level pilot program;

(3) clarify that the bill requires both potential interns and potential farming internship providers to submit applications to the respective county board of agriculture, and to receive approval from the board, in order to participate in the county's pilot program; and

(4) make technical changes in order to improve sentence structure, remove a redundant provision, ensure the proper use of parallel language and structure, ensure that distinct material is properly separated into distinct subdivisions, and otherwise improve clarity.