P.L. 2021, CHAPTER 404, ***approved January 18, 2022***
Senate, No. 3539

AN ACT establishing a community garden grant program and supplementing Title 13 of the Revised Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. a. The Department of Environmental Protection, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, and within the limits of monies appropriated for such purposes, shall establish a program to provide grants to local government units to support the development and maintenance of pollinator friendly community gardens in the State, in order to provide readily available sources of fresh, healthy foods to communities that may lack easy access to affordable fruits and vegetables, and support the State's population of pollinating animals.

b. In establishing the grant program pursuant to this section, the department shall:

(1) develop guidelines and procedures for the submission of grant applications, and criteria for the evaluation of such applications;

(2) establish terms and conditions for the awarding of a grant under this section, and monitor grant recipients' compliance with the terms and conditions;

(3) require the local government unit to partner with a nonprofit organization in establishing and maintaining the community garden;

(4) require the recipient of a grant to report to the department information relating to its use of grant funds under the program; and

(5) submit a report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), the Legislature, during each year in which a grant is awarded, on the effectiveness of the grant program in assisting with the development of community gardens for the purposes stated in subsection a. of this section.

c. The department may, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), adopt rules and regulations as are necessary to establish and implement the grant program.

d. The Commissioner of Environmental Protection shall include with the annual budget request for the Department of Environmental Protection a request for funds sufficient to carry out the purposes and intent of this act.

e. As used in this section:

"Community garden" means an area of land upon which individuals have the opportunity to garden on pieces of land that they do not individually own.

"Local government unit" means a county, a municipality, or any board, commission, committee, authority, or agency thereof that is subject to the provisions of the "Local Public Contracts Law," P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-1 et seq.), including a housing authority or redevelopment agency created or continued under the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-1 et seq.).

"Pollinator friendly garden" means a garden that contains a sufficient proportion of native plants, forbs, or legumes to provide a steady supply of food to pollinating insects or birds.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill would direct the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to establish a grant program for local government units to support the development and maintenance of pollinator friendly community gardens in the State, in order to provide readily available sources of fresh, healthy foods to communities that may lack easy access to affordable fruits and vegetables, and support the State's population of pollinating animals. The local government unit would be required to partner with a nonprofit organization in order to develop and maintain the community garden. Implementation of the grant program would be subject to a future appropriation by the Legislature.

Directs DEP to establish grant program for local governments to support development of community gardens.