

SENATE ECONOMIC GROWTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 3559

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 15, 2021

The Senate Economic Growth Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 3559.

As reported, this bill directs the Department of Agriculture (department) to establish a New Jersey Minority, Women, and Underserved Farmer Registry (State registry). Through the department's Farm Liaison designated by the Secretary of Agriculture, the bill directs the department to:

- 1) coordinate outreach to minority, women, disabled, LGBTQIA+ as defined in the bill, and socially disadvantaged farmers in the State who have been historically underserved by farm loan assistance programs, and programs for beginning farmer loans, emergency farm loans, farm loan servicing, farm operating loans, guaranteed farm loans, direct operating loans, direct farm ownership down payment loans, microloans, and other business assistance available to farmers in the State;

- 2) register minority, women, disabled, LGBTQIA+, socially disadvantaged, and historically underserved farmers to receive notification of opportunities to apply for these loans and participate in these programs;

- 3) assist in the prioritization of registry applications of minority, women, disabled, LGBTQIA+, socially disadvantaged, and historically underserved farmers;

- 4) provide each registrant with information concerning the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) minority farm register; and

- (5) provide each registrant the opportunity to register with the USDA minority farm register.

The bill also provides that, 180 days after the establishment of the State registry, and every 180 days thereafter, the department is required to:

- 1) review and compare the State registrants with the farmers who have registered with the USDA federal register;

- 2) notify any State registrant that is not registered with the federal USDA register of the benefits of being registered with both registers; and

- 3) encourage the State registrant to register with the federal USDA register.

The bill provides that, to the greatest extent possible, the department ensure that the criteria for inclusion in the State registry is the same as the criteria for inclusion in the federal USDA register so that any State registrant may be included in both registries. The bill also requires that, whenever the criteria for inclusion in the federal USDA register is updated to include any additional individuals or groups of farmers, the department update accordingly, the criteria for inclusion in the State registry and coordinate outreach to the additional individuals or groups of farmers.