



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## RITCHIE MEASURES SEEK TO CREATE NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH STATE GOVERNMENT TO GROW AG IN NEW YORK

PATTY RITCHIE June 8, 2016



State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced two bipartisan measures she sponsors that will make entering into farming easier for people new to the profession, boost business for existing farmers and connect consumers with more New York-grown and produced foods have passed the Senate.

The first measure, Senate bill 6648, also known as the “Buy From the Backyard Act,” would require state agencies to buy 20 percent of all their food products from producers and

processors in New York State. The measure is seen as a way to get more locally grown and produced foods in our state's hospitals, colleges, offices, prisons and other places, as well as to support local farmers.

Under the second measure, Senate bill 7011-A, the state would be required to develop an inventory of state-owned property that's prime for agricultural development, making it easier for those new to the industry to access land that's ready to be farmed. The measure is now headed to the Governor's desk to become law.

"This year we have made great strides in not only strengthening the connection between consumers who are increasingly looking to eat local—and healthy—foods, but also in fostering new opportunities for people who are looking to enter into agriculture careers and produce the nutritious fruits, vegetables and other products people depend on," said Senator Ritchie.

"These measures take us closer to our goals of strengthening New York's leading industry, and providing a boost for farmers—both new and experienced—across our state."

As Senate Agriculture Committee Chair, Senator Ritchie has been focused in recent years on making New York-grown and produced foods more accessible to consumers, as well as to encourage state agencies to increase their use.

Previously, she sponsored legislation, which was signed into law, that required state officials to create a list of competitively priced food products available for institutional sale, giving state agencies easy access to farm fresh products. In addition, she has also supported funding for key programs in the state budget that are helping to increase the use of nutritious, locally sourced foods in schools across New York State.

Providing new farmers with the tools and resources needed to be successful has also been a priority of Senator Ritchie's, and through her "Young Farmers NY" program, those new to the profession are benefitting from grants, a loan forgiveness program and other incentives that are helping them to begin and strengthen their agribusinesses.