



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Bill To Create "Young Farmers Advisory Board" Signed Into Law

PATTY RITCHIE July 26, 2017



State Senator Patty Ritchie today announced that the Governor has signed her bill to create a “Young Farmers Advisory Board,” bringing together leading agriculture experts to help protect the future of family farming in New York. The new law (S.4021) creates a 20-member board, made up of farmers, representatives of agricultural organizations and state agencies to find ways to attract next-generation farmers, and connect them with existing state resources that will help them succeed.

“If we want to make sure that agriculture remains our state’s leading industry, it’s imperative that we continue to come up with new, fresh ideas that will encourage more young people to consider careers in farming,” said Senator Ritchie, who serves as Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. “There’s no better way to do that than to tap into the experience and expertise of our state’s hardworking farmers. I am pleased to see this bill become law and look forward to seeing how the Young Farmers Advisory Board will help those new to agriculture achieve success and in turn, preserve the future of family farming for many years to come.”

It is estimated that in five years, there will be 100,000 young farmers needed nationally and in New York, the average age of a farmer is 57—making initiatives like the Young Farmers Advisory Board especially important to the future of the industry.

“The future of farming in New York State depends on encouraging young people to pursue careers in agriculture,” said Assemblyman Bill Magee, who sponsored the legislation in the Assembly and serves as Chair of the Assembly Agriculture Committee. “Through the new Young Farmers Advisory Board, those who have achieved success in agriculture can continue to help pave the way for those who will follow in their footsteps and provide the guidance needed to help new and beginning farmers thrive.”

The new law builds on Senator Ritchie’s previous efforts to help new farmers succeed. In the 2017-2018 state budget, Senator Ritchie secured \$1 million for a fourth round of the “New Farmers Grant Fund.” Created by Senator Ritchie, the grant program provides up to \$50,000 for agriculture professionals to help offset startup costs with equipment and land purchases. More than 70 beginning farmers have already shared in the \$2.5 million in grants to help them build their farm businesses. In addition, Senator Ritchie also secured \$150,000 in the recent state budget to continue the “student loan forgiveness program” to help those who commit to careers in farming cover their education expenses.