



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jen Metzger

Senator Metzger Visits Young Farming Family at Berry Brook Farm

JEN METZGER July 15, 2019

| ISSUE: **BEGINNING FARMERS GRANT FUND, YOUNG FARMERS, ORGANIC FARMING, BERRY BROOK FARM, NEW YORK FARMS**



(Hamden, NY) On Friday, State Senator Jen Metzger visited Berry Brook Farm in Hamden (Delaware County), to celebrate Berry Brook as one of nearly thirty recipients of the state's Beginning Farmers Grant Fund, which allows new and early-stage farmers to access funds to help grow their farming businesses. Berry Brook, a NOFA-NY Certified Organic vegetable farm owned and operated by Eleanor Blakeslee-Drain and Patrick Hennebery, received \$16,500 to construct a greenhouse and expand cold storage in their barn.

Also in attendance were Board Chair Sally Fairbairn and Easement Program Stewardship Coordinator Rob Birdsall from the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC); Hamden Town Supervisor Wayne Marshfield; and Bari Zeiger, a sixth-year farmer and President of the Greater Catskills Chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition. The group discussed some of the obstacles faced by new farmers, as well as legislation that was introduced in the 2019 legislative session to address some of those obstacles.

“As Senate Agriculture Chair, it has been exciting to see so many young people committed to pursuing farming careers, as well as such a strong interest in using innovative sustainable practices,” **said Senator Metzger.** “It is not easy to begin as a new farmer, and with programs like the Beginning Farmer Grant Program, we can help support our next generation of agricultural stewards, like Eleanor, Patrick and Bari, who are helping rejuvenate our rural communities and meet the increasing demand for local products.”

“The future of farming is one where farmers are recognized and compensated for the valuable ecosystem services that we can provide, and one where we can earn a living that sustains quality of life and nourishes ourselves and our communities, while stewarding the land,” **shared Bari Zeiger, President of the Greater Catskills Chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition.** “Chairwoman Metzger came running out of the gate in January – engaging directly with our farming community and championing important legislation that addresses the unique challenges faced by young farmers. We look forward to working with the Senator to advance more young farmer priorities next session.”

“The Town of Hamden has a Town Comprehensive Plan specifically designed to help our farmers. We are so fortunate to have Senator Metzger’s help for our hard-working farmers and for the Senator’s help in attaining Hamden’s comprehensive plan goals,” **shared Hamden Town Supervisor, Wayne Marshfield.**

“The Watershed Agricultural Council is proud that our Easement and Economic Viability Programs have been part of the team that helped ensure that this beautiful farm will continue to be used for agriculture,” **said Sally Fairbairn, Board Chair of the Watershed Agricultural Council.** “WAC applauds Senator Metzger's efforts to support the next generation of farmers with this grant program and her other efforts recognizing the importance of agriculture to NYC's Watershed and all of Upstate New York.”

WAC's Easement and Economic Viability Programs enabled Eleanor and Patrick to purchase the property from the previous owners whose farm it had been for generations, first operating as a dairy farm over 100 years ago.

The Beginning Farmers Grant Fund is administered by Empire State Development, in consultation with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Successful applicants can receive grants of up to \$50,000 to assist with up to 50 percent of eligible project costs.

During the 2019 legislative session, Metzger sponsored and helped pass through the Senate a number of bills to support new and early-stage farmers including two bills to expand eligibility for the Beginning Farmers Fund (S.5716) and the Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program (S.5715) and (S.3837) which creates a young farmers apprentice program through BOCES to help the next generation of farmers learn and develop skills.

RELATED LEGISLATION

2019-S5716

-
- Introduced
 - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
 - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
 - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
 - Vetoed By Governor
 - Signed By Governor
 -

Relates to awards of grants from the beginning farmers NY fund

May 13, 2019

Vetoed

Sponsored by [Jen Metzger](#)

Do you support this bill?

2019-S5715

- Introduced
 - ◦ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
 - ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
 - ◦ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Relates to eligibility under the New York state young farmers loan forgiveness incentive program

May 13, 2019

In Senate Committee [Finance](#)

Sponsored by [Jen Metzger](#)

Do you support this bill?

2019-S3837

- Introduced
 - ◦ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
 - ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
 - ◦ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Relates to membership on the board of the metropolitan transportation authority

February 19, 2019

In Senate Committee [Transportation](#)

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Do you support this bill?