



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jen Metzger

Senate Ag Committee Chair Jen Metzger Provides Highlights of 2020-2021 State Budget for Agriculture in Difficult Budget Year

JEN METZGER April 16, 2020

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Albany, NY... Governor Cuomo signed New York State's final budget bills last night, fully enacting the 2020-2021 budget. In a difficult budget year, and in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak and its unfolding economic and fiscal impacts, Senator Jen Metzger (SD-42), Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, worked with Assembly Agriculture Chair Donna Lupardo to successfully restore nearly \$5 million in cuts proposed by the Executive Budget, including \$1 million in funding for Agri-Business Child Development (ABCD), which provides early education and social services to farm labor families across the state.

The final budget appropriates over \$31 million for important research, marketing, and other agricultural programs, and protects capital funding for agriculture in the Environmental Protection Fund at current levels, including farmland protection (\$18 million), agricultural non-point source abatement and control (\$18 million), agricultural waste management (\$1.5 million), and programs supporting climate resilience on farms (\$4.5 million).

Metzger was also able to restore \$400,000 in proposed cuts in the Mental Health budget for Farmnet, a Cornell program that provides vital mental health services to farmers and farm families--services that are in particular demand during this challenging time.

"In the midst of an unprecedented public health crisis, it's critically important that we support New York's farms and food producers, who are struggling with the impacts of COVID-19 on the economy and on their operations," **said Senator Metzger.** "Our farms provide an essential service in this difficult time, and are key to maintaining our long-term food security in New York and nationally."

Metzger also successfully advocated for \$85,000 in the final state budget to support a Dairy Industry Strategic Plan for Delaware, Sullivan, and Orange counties. The project was proposed by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County, and will engage dairy farmers and agricultural organizations in a collaborative process to assess barriers and opportunities for dairy farms in these counties, most of which are small and family-operated, and develop a strategy to sustain this important agricultural sector in the Catskills and Hudson Valley for the long term.

To assist farmers in making improvements to farmworker housing, the 2020-2021 budget includes \$15 million in new funding for no-interest loans through the New York State Farm Worker Housing (FWH) loan program, and incorporates legislation Metzger introduced (

S6433) to double the loan cap from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

"I am very pleased that we were able to increase funding for this valuable program, and that my bill to double the lending cap has become law," **said Senator Metzger**. "The maximum amount of the loan has been the same since the program started over twenty years ago, and the new cap better reflects current costs and is long overdue."

Senator Metzger's district includes over 2,000 farms, mostly small, family-owned operations. Her office has been working to provide needed information to the farm community during the public health crisis, and has produced a COVID-19 Resource Guide for farmers and ag-related businesses, which is updated regularly and can be found at bit.ly/COVID-19-Ag-GUIDE.