



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jen Metzger

## State Legislation Passed to Protect Farmers' Agricultural Tax Assessment in Event of COVID-Related Sales Declines

JEN METZGER July 22, 2020

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19, DAIRY FARMERS**



**Albany, NY...** Senate Agriculture Chair Jen Metzger (SD-42) and Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther (AD-100) this week passed a bill (A10464/S8464A) to ensure farmers negatively affected by COVID-19 do not lose their agricultural property tax assessments. Nationally, many farms have seen a big decline in sales, and dairy farms have taken a particularly big hit, many being forced to dump their milk. Currently, agricultural operations are required to have at least \$10,000 in gross sales over two years for farms over seven acres in size and \$50,000 in gross sales for those under seven acres. The Gunther-Metzger bill provides that

farms that met the requirement before the pandemic would continue to receive the assessment despite the potential reduction in sales.

“New York State needs to be doing everything it can to support our farmers. We’ve all seen the stories— farmers having to dump their product because distribution channels were disrupted due to COVID,” **said Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther.** “Farmers have had a difficult enough time during this pandemic, we shouldn’t be increasing their property taxes on top of everything else.”

“Our family farms have been hit hard during this pandemic, and face great uncertainty about what this year will bring in terms of sales,” **said Senator Jen Metzger, who serves as Chair of the State Senate's Agriculture Committee.** “This bill provides assurance that farms can hold on to their agricultural property tax assessment even if gross sales fall short during this challenging time. Our farms are critical to New York's economic recovery and food security, and this bill will help to keep our farmers on their land.”

Many dairy farms, in particular, were forced to dump their milk earlier this year due to disruptions in the marketplace. In April, Senator Metzger sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to swiftly aid New York's dairy farms, which have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The joint letter with the State Senate's Rural Resources Commission, signed by six Senators, requests that the USDA immediately direct to the New York dairy industry a portion of the \$9.5 billion set aside for agriculture in the \$2.2 trillion federal relief package, known as the CARES Act, which was signed into law on March 27.

**New York Farm Bureau President David Fisher said,** “The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every farm in the state in different ways. It has been especially challenging with the loss of markets and disruptions in the food supply chain. The legislation passed today with the

support of Senator Metzger and Assembly Member Gunther will assist farms that struggled to meet income requirements necessary to maintain their agricultural assessment. The program is a valuable tool for farmers to help rein in rising property taxes, and we appreciate the legislative support to help farms through these challenging times,”

**Greater Catskills Young Farmers Coalition President Bari Ziegler said,** “At the center of the matrix of collapses in wholesale and restaurant accounts, diminished access to regional abattoirs, labor shortages, and shortcomings of federal relief programs in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, are BIPOC, young, small-scale, speciality or diversified farmers. Commonly, many of these farmers directly nourish their respective communities and contribute to their local economies while implementing conservation best management practices to steward the land and contribute to the public good via supporting a myriad of ecosystem services. By reducing the sales threshold required for an agricultural assessment, NYS acknowledges the hardship of these resilient farmers, helps keep land in agriculture, and supports keeping farmers on the land. This is crucial for food security, local economic stimulation, and climate change mitigation in the State. Provided this, as a young farmer and representative of the Greater Catskills Young Farmers Coalition, I support Senate Bill S8464A.”

*Jen Metzger represents the 42nd Senate District, which includes all of Sullivan County and parts of Delaware, Orange, and Ulster Counties. Senator Metzger serves as Chair of the Agriculture Committee and sits on the Environmental Conservation, Education, Health, Energy and Telecommunications, Local Government, Women’s Issues, Domestic Animal Welfare, and Legislative Commission on Rural Resources Committees.*

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RELATED LEGISLATION

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## 2019-S8464A

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- 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 land used in agricultural production

June 03, 2020

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by **Jen Metzger**

Do you support this bill?