



New York Farm Bureau
Lauren Williams, Associate Director
P.518.436.8495
lwilliams@nyfb.org

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Senate Bill 852 (Senator Young)

AN ACT TO AMEND THE AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS LAW AND EDUCATION LAW, IN RELATION TO FARM CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Date: 2/3/2017

New York Farm Bureau, the state's largest general farm organization, respectfully urges you to support this legislation. If enacted, this bill would provide guidance to farmers who are implementing environmental best management practices (BMPs) on farms about the need for certain practical requirements. In doing so, the legislation would help farms more quickly and cost-effectively implement these environmental protections.

Maintaining over one-quarter of the land area in New York State, farmers truly are stewards of the land. They take this role very seriously and work hard to continually improve farm environmental sustainability. In fact, there are currently over 13,000 farms in 55 counties participating in the voluntary Agricultural Environmental Management program administered by the NYS Soil & Water Conservation Committee. Improving farm environmental protection is often accomplished through the implementation of specific environmental BMPs. One example of this would be the installation of a grassy filter strip to absorb any excess nutrients from a field.

Farm environmental BMPs are installed under the direction of local Soil & Water Conservation Districts and their employees. These professionals are highly trained and have a working knowledge of practical, on-farm environmental improvement efforts. They provide the necessary technical expertise to implement these important BMPs.

Unfortunately, a recent administrative decision by the Department of Education has limited the local determination of technical assistance required on a project. This has meant a more expensive, time consuming process, without any additional improvement to the environment. Such burdens reduce a farmer's willingness to participate in the program while lessening the impact of public dollars in improving the environment.

This bill would allow the agency with the most experience in on-farm environmental assistance to establish the standards and guidance about the amount of technical assistance necessary to implement farm BMPs. This will reduce unnecessary cost and review, getting projects on the ground quicker.

For these reasons, your support of this legislation is respectfully requested.