



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Senator Hinchey and Assemblymember Lupardo Sponsor Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act, Nation-Leading Legislation Making NY Farmers Key Part of Fight Against Climate Change

MICHELLE HINCHEY June 2, 2021

| ISSUE: **NYS SOIL HEALTH & CLIMATE RESILIENCY ACT**

| COMMITTEE: **AGRICULTURE**



ALBANY, N.Y. (June 2, 2021) – Today, State Senator Michelle Hinchey (SD-46) and Assemblymember Donna Lupardo (AD-123) **gathered a broad coalition** of environmental and agricultural organizations to discuss the *NYS Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act* ([S.4722A](#)-Hinchey/[A.5386A](#)-Lupardo), nation-leading legislation to provide farmers with the tools and resources they need to be active partners in New York's efforts to mitigate the climate crisis.

The bill, which passed the State Assembly unanimously last week (147-0), is expected to come before the Senate for a vote this week. Agriculture chairs Hinchey and Lupardo have built a wide range of support for the bill to help secure its passage in both houses before the end of session, which is just one-week away.

The *Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act* establishes a Soil Health Initiative, a Climate Resilient Farming Initiative, and a Research Initiative through the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets—all steps forward to scale sustainable soil health practices that will increase carbon sequestration to help the state meet its climate goals while improving water quality and promoting resilience to extreme weather events both on-farm and in surrounding communities.

The bill charges Ag & Markets with creating voluntary science-based standards for soil health that will drive on-farm planning and goal setting, and enable farmers to take advantage of existing and new private, state, and federal funding to implement farm management practices that promote soil health. The bill also seeks to codify, for the first time in State Law, definitions of soil health and soil health practices that will lay the groundwork for future policy.

“New York agriculture is a core part of the solution to fighting climate change in our state, and the Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act is the legislation that will truly solidify this essential partnership,” said **Senator Michelle Hinchey, Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee**. “This legislation will codify, for the first time in State law, soil health and climate-resilient farming practices to safeguard our food supply, water, and air quality for generations to come. Improving the health of agricultural soils is one of the most important climate solutions of our time, and I am proud to sponsor this transformative legislation to bring New York’s soil health laws to 21st century standards.”

Assemblymember Donna Lupardo, Chair of the Assembly Agriculture Committee said, “The Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act recognizes the vital role agriculture can play in helping the state achieve its climate goals. It starts off with the simple premise that the health and resiliency of NY’s agricultural soil is an important priority. Healthy soil produces healthier foods, mitigates climate change through carbon sequestration, and protects our natural resources. Sometimes referred to as regenerative agriculture, this bill is a first step toward encouraging a “culture of soil health” in NYS. I am proud of the fact that the Assembly unanimously passed the bill last week and am looking forward to its passage in the Senate.”

“New York State’s current soil health laws date to 1938 and they came about as the result of the Dust Bowl,” said **Assemblymember Didi Barrett**. “This long overdue legislation makes the important connection between soil health, clean water and clean air, and spotlights the critical mitigating effects of carbon sequestration on climate change. I thank the Agriculture Committee Chairs, Senator Hinchey and Assemblymember Lupardo, for introducing this important legislation, and I urge the State Senate to pass this bill.”

Elizabeth Wolters, New York Farm Bureau Deputy Public Policy Director, said "New York agriculture is a leader in innovation and environmental management. The Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act would build on that legacy and work with farmers to implement best management practices to further reduce carbon emissions. New York Farm Bureau thanks Sen. Michelle Hinchey and Assembly Member Donna Lupardo for their critical support and encourages the full legislature to pass this bill."

“Improving soil health on working farms is one of the single best practices for enhancing farm viability, conserving soil and water, and addressing a changing climate,” said **Andy Bicking, Director of Government Relations and Public Policy for Scenic Hudson**. “Senator Hinchey, Assemblymember Lupardo, and Assemblymember Barrett are helping lead New

York State toward a brighter and economically-sustainable future with the solutions-oriented, evidence-based Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act.”

“By passing this soil health bill, New York will take a critical step towards supporting farmers’ efforts to improve their soil in ways that are robust, practical, and equitable,” said **Samantha Levy, New York Policy Manager for American Farmland Trust**. “Improving soil health supports farm viability and resilience to extreme weather events, while also improving air and water quality in our communities, and enabling more farmers to join the fight against climate change. AFT applauds Senator Hinchey, Assemblywoman Lupardo, and Assemblywoman Barrett for their leadership on the Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act, encourages the legislature to pass this bill this year, and stands at the ready to implement it alongside farmers and partner organizations across the state.”

Peter M. Iwanowicz, Executive Director of Environmental Advocates NY said, “Ensuring soil health is the foundation of climate-friendly farming. Adopting optimal irrigation strategies and supporting and maintaining diverse ecosystems will increase productivity, protect our natural resources, and improve climate resilience. We applaud sponsors Senator Michelle Hinchey and Assemblymember Donna Lupardo for their leadership and foresight and look forward to working with them to ensure these practices become law.”

“We applaud the work of NY Assembly Ag Committee leader Donna Lupardo, and NY Senate Ag Committee leader Michelle Hinchey for their far-sighted work in acknowledging the importance of soil health for farmers as well as the entire state,” said **Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY) Executive Director Bethany Wallis**, “Research makes it abundantly clear that healthier soils store carbon, absorb many times their weight in water and will save the state money on water quality and stormwater control while providing greater food security based on more prosperous, resilient farms as anchors of rural

development and also of urban well-being.”

Supporters of the NYS Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act Include:

National Organizations

American Farmland Trust

EarthJustice

Carbon Cycle Institute

Land Trust Alliance

Natural Resources Defense Council

Regional, State, and Local Organizations

Agricultural Stewardship Association

Boldly, NY

Catskill Mountainkeeper

Citizens’ Climate Lobby - New York State

Delaware Highlands Conservancy

Environmental Advocates NY

Essex Farm Institute

Hunt Country Vineyards

Long Island Wine Country

Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy

New York Corn & Soybean Growers Association

New York Farm Bureau

New York League of Conservation Voters

New York State Vegetable Growers Association

Northeast Dairy Producers Association, Inc.

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York

Otsego Land Trust

Saratoga PLAN - Preserving Land and Nature

Scenic Hudson

The Nature Conservancy New York

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust

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RELATED LEGISLATION

2021-S4722A

- 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

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Establishes the soil health and climate resiliency act

February 10, 2021

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by [Michelle Hinchey](#)

Do you support this bill?