



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senate Ok's Ritchie Bill to Boost Local Food in State Facilities

PATTY RITCHIE June 12, 2013

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Plan Would Support Local Farmers, Improve Nutrition in Prisons, Hospitals

The State Senate today approved legislation sponsored by Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Patty Ritchie that seeks to boost the amount of locally produced food sold to state prisons, hospitals and other facilities.

FIND LOCAL FOOD AT AREA FARMERS MARKETS

The measure (S.4061) would give agencies easy access to farm fresh products by directing officials to create a list of competitively priced food products that are available for institutional sale.

“The benefits of putting more locally grown foods in our hospitals, prisons and other state facilities are obvious—healthier, more nutritious meals for consumers and a ready-made market for hardworking local farmers,” said Senator Ritchie.

“My bill aims to strengthen the partnership between farmers and state agencies so that its easier for them to find and procure locally produced foods, strengthening farmers’ bottom lines and keeping more state tax dollars in the community.”

The state’s Council on Food Policy has set a goal of increasing state purchases of local food to 20 percent by 2020. And Senator Ritchie’s bill was named a top priority by America’s Farmland Trust, a nationwide organization that promotes eating more local foods as a way to help preserve farmland, farm industry and open space.

“In addition to encouraging more consumers to buy and eat local, I want to take advantage of the tremendous purchasing power of government to help our leading industry—agriculture—grow,” said Senator Ritchie.

Senator Ritchie’s bill would require state officials to regularly update their local food purchasing lists and measure state agencies’ compliance with directives to expand purchases from local sources.

The bill was sent to the Assembly, where it is sponsored by Assembly Member Crystal Peoples-Stokes.