

2015-J6112

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Farmland Protection Program

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body that the continuing welfare of the citizens of the State of New York is greatly enriched and reliably served by the purposeful endeavors of programs which are committed to the preservation of our natural environment and the enhancement of the appreciation of the distinctive features of our surroundings, and to the economic well-being of the areas in which they exist; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Farmland Protection Program and to recognize the important role it plays in New York State; and

WHEREAS, In 1996, the Farmland Protection Program was enacted to protect and conserve farmland and preserve prime, unique, and productive soil from the nonagricultural uses of such land; and

WHEREAS, Supported by farmers and citizens concerned about the rapid loss of farmland to development, the Farmland Protection Program has helped save millions of acres of farmland from development and has led the way in establishing sound environmental practices on millions more; and

WHEREAS, The Farmland Protection Program strives to create public and private conservation easement programs which keep farmland in the hands of farmers, enabling them to resist development pressure, and compensating them for giving up development rights; and

WHEREAS, Today, nearly 30 percent of New York's farmers are over the age of 65, and subsequently, will be transitioning out of farming in the coming years; these farmers manage nearly two million acres of land

across New York which could be lost to real estate development when they retire; and

WHEREAS, Research conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture, American Farmland Trust and the American Farm Bureau Federation has demonstrated that accessing farmland is one of the biggest barriers for new farmers; and

WHEREAS, In 1992, then Governor Mario Cuomo and the New York State Legislature passed the Agricultural Protection Act which created Article 25-AAA of the State Agriculture and Markets Law and authorized the Commissioner of Agriculture to establish an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Program to protect New York's working farmland; and

WHEREAS, Throughout its 20 year history, the Farmland Protection Program has played a key role in supporting sustainable farm practices, providing incentives for farmers to adopt best management practices, and keeping farmers on their land; and

WHEREAS, To date, the Farmland Protection Program has provided significant funds to permanently protect 59,150 acres of farmland on 222 farms in 29 counties across New York State; and

WHEREAS, An important goal of the Farmland Protection Program has been to save family farms by building community support for agriculture, and ensuring access to land for the next generation of farmers; and

WHEREAS, With America losing an acre of farmland every single minute of every day, the Farmland Protection Program fills a critical need in protecting valuable farmland for future generations; and

WHEREAS, Since its inception, the Farmland Protection Program has helped farmers who want to see their land remain in farming, through the use of innovative approaches to farm succession and transfer, and the preservation of farmland for younger generations; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize the important progress which has been made in New York to protect prime, unique and working farmland over the last two decades, and to thank the

hundreds of farm families which have made a permanent commitment to keeping their land available for future generations of farmers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Farmland Protection Program; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to David Haight, New York Director, American Farmland Trust.