



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Thomas F. O'Mara

'Young Farmer Apprenticeship Program' signed into law: O'Mara supported legislation earlier this year to allow BOCES to establish apprenticeship programs

THOMAS F. O'MARA December 8, 2020

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The new law authorizes Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) throughout New York to establish agriculture apprentice programs designed to encourage young farmers to consider careers in agriculture.

Albany, N.Y., December 8—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) said today that legislation he supported and voted for in the Senate earlier this year to establish a "Young Farmer Apprenticeship Program" has been signed into law.

The new law (S3873/A7104, Chapter 298 of the Laws of 2020) was unanimously approved by the Senate in early March. The State Assembly approved the measure in late July and it was recently signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Throughout his tenure in the Senate, O'Mara has helped develop, sponsor and support numerous actions aimed at encouraging the next generation of farmers including, in 2014, the establishment of a "New Farmers Grant Fund" that has since provided state funding to assist many early-stage farmers statewide.

"These ongoing initiatives and investments to assist, encourage and spark the success of New York's next generation of farmers are critical to help keep our regional and statewide agricultural economies among the strongest and best in the nation," said O'Mara, a former member of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the joint, bipartisan Legislative Commission on Rural Resources.

The new law authorizes Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) throughout New York to establish agriculture apprentice programs designed to encourage young farmers to consider careers in agriculture.

The average age of farm operators in New York is 59, a trend expected to continue to increase unless steps are taken to reverse it. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture has set a goal of recruiting 100,000 new farmers across the country to replace those who are retiring.

O'Mara added that a BOCES-based young farmer apprenticeship program could also help keep New York's agricultural lands in production and prevent the loss of other agricultural-related businesses in rural, Upstate economies.