



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

## Senator Michelle Hinchey Convenes First Agriculture Committee Meeting, Moves Four Bills to Support New York Farmers and Increase Food Access

MICHELLE HINCHEY January 25, 2021

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**Albany, NY...** Under the direction of State Senator Michelle Hinchey (SD-46), the Senate Agriculture Committee today convened its first meeting of the 2021 legislative session, advancing four bills out of committee to expand markets for New York farm products and increase the availability of healthful, locally sourced foods across the state and in areas with

limited access known as “food deserts.”

“It was a productive first meeting of the Senate Agriculture Committee. My colleagues and I are focused on addressing many pressing needs simultaneously, knowing how vital our agricultural sector is to New York’s economy and long-term food security,” **said Senator Hinchey.** “The bills we advanced today are a win-win for New York farmers and residents alike and will get us closer to our goal of providing all New Yorkers with easier, more equitable access to farm-fresh products with an important emphasis on our underserved areas. In the coming months, we will be working diligently to move forward legislation that will cut through regulatory red tape for farmers and agribusinesses, help them access new markets, and supply communities across the state with nutritious New York-grown and produced products. I thank Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for allowing me the great privilege of leading this committee.”

Senator Hinchey and members of the Agriculture Committee voted to advance the following bills today:

**Agricultural Custom Operator Protections:** This bill, [S2135](#), sponsored by Senator Michelle Hinchey, will provide agricultural custom operators with agricultural district protections, which they are currently ineligible for. Agricultural custom operators are often hired by farmers to complete routine agricultural work and play an important role in helping farmers manage their operations.

**Task Force on Improving Urban and Rural Consumer Access to Locally-Produced, Healthy Foods:** This bill, [S1056](#), sponsored by Senator James Sanders Jr., creates a task force composed of farmers, representatives of non-for-profit food access organizations, economic development agencies, and other stakeholders, charged with developing and identifying methods to

increase access to New York grown and produced food for underserved, nutritionally deficient urban and rural communities.

**Regional Farmers' Market Expansion:** This bill, [S2199](#), sponsored by Senator Timothy Kennedy, directs the Department of Agriculture and Markets to establish or expand existing regional farmers' markets with a particular focus on areas of the state that have poor consumer access to high quality and reasonably priced fresh food and farm products.

**Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act:** This bill, [S549](#), sponsored by Senator James Sanders Jr., establishes the New York State Council on Food Policy to coordinate, support, and expand programs that promote New York farm and food products and set goals for procurement of local foods by state agencies and facilities to increase markets for New York agricultural products.

As of the 2021 legislative session, the Senate Agriculture Committee will also consider bills that handle matters of domestic animal welfare, and today advanced the following:

**Buoy's Law:** This bill, [S1289](#), sponsored by Senator John E. Brooks requires veterinarians to notify owners of potential risks and side effects of medication before prescribing or otherwise providing medication to an animal.

**New Felony Level for Enterprise Animal Fighting:** This bill, [S90](#), sponsored by Senator Todd Kaminsky, introduces enterprise animal fighting as a new felony-level offense, differentiates the levels of offense, adjusts penalty classifications, and provides consistency to the animal fighting laws.

*Senator Michelle Hinchey represents the 46th Senate District, which includes Greene and Montgomery Counties and parts of Albany, Schenectady, and Ulster Counties. Senator Hinchey serves as Chair of the*

*Agriculture Committee and sits on the Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business, Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, Energy and Telecommunications, Environmental Conservation, and Local Government Committees.*

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