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# New York State Association of Agricultural Fairs, Inc.

February 13, 2017

Dear Senator/Assembly member

First I want to thank our Senators and Assemble members for their support last year for the premium dollars and for their generous support for the \$5 million dollars for capital expenses. As you may know that money has just become available to our fairs and many are currently moving forward to have their projects approved. Thank You.

The 2017-18 executive budget as proposed includes \$340,000 annual appropriation for fair premium dollars. Last year the legislature increased the dollars to \$500,000. These dollars were a tremendous help in maintaining the youth programs at our county fairs. We are asking the legislature to increase the premium dollars to \$500,000 again this year.

One of the greatest experiences that our young people can have is participating in their county fair. For many it's an experience that stays with them for the rest of their lives as they learn about all aspects of their local agriculture and home community. The one common thread that runs throughout the fair industry, regardless of the size and scope of the fair is the pride that these young people have in their exhibits and in their fairs. Helping our fairs survive is paramount to their ability to provide this important experience for these young people.

Unfortunately the only funds that many of our fairs have to reward these young people with come from the state premium dollars.

County fairs remain one of the last critical linkages between our agricultural heritage and today's urban-based society. Current statistics indicate that New York agricultural fairs attract over 4,000,000 people through their gates each year. The agricultural exhibits, activities and programs during fair week are the only opportunities for the vast majority of non-farm families to learn about and come to appreciate their connection and relevancy to today's agricultural world.

Despite the fact that we have an agricultural heritage within most all of our families, the generational distance from our farming roots is growing longer and fainter. Therefore, county fairs play a critical educational role that must be continued for betterment of our society

R Harry Booth, Director of Public policy, NYSAAF

**CONVENTION DATES - JANUARY 12, 13, 14, 15, 2018**

**JOSEPH A. FLOREANO ROCHESTER RIVERSIDE CONVENTION CENTER, ROCHESTER, NY**