April 14th, 2021

Dear Senator Hinchey,

Thank you for your leadership in organizing the public hearing on Diversifying Agriculture and Food Justice. This is a topic that our coalition cares deeply about, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony. **The National Young Farmers Coalition represents and engages young and beginning farmers to fight for a brighter, more equitable agricultural future.**

**In order to institute systemic change in support of Black farmers and growers statewide, we support** [**Black Farmers United**](https://www.blackfarmersunited.org/) **- New York State (BFU-NYS) and we stand by BFU-NYS’s “9 Solutions for Racial Inequity in New York Agriculture.**We would specifically like to highlight the challenges they reference faced by young BIPOC farmers when accessing affordable farmland and capital. Access to land is consistently a barrier for young farmers when beginning their own operations. We know that this is true for all beginning farmers, but that Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) farmers particularly face the additional challenge of systemic racism and individual bias, as well as a lack of culturally appropriate support when it comes to navigating business and technical services.

New York State has an aging population of farmers who will be retiring and transitioning their land in the coming decade. **We need to invest in the next generation of farmers, ensuring that it is as robust and diverse as New York itself.** In addition to accessing affordable, secure farmland, young BIPOC farmers must be supported in building the skills necessary to have an environmentally sustainable, economically viable business. We applaud the policy initiatives that Senator Hinchey and others are proposing to support the next generation of BIPOC farmers, such as The Equitable Farm Futures Initiative, which provides funding to Cornell Small Farms Institute to expand its “Master Gardener” program to better serve BIPOC farmers.

BFU’s ninth solution speaks directly to policy makers, and is a call to action: increase the numbers of BIPOC farmers in New York who are thriving by hearing their solutions and converting them into actionable legislation. **Black Farmers United NYS’s “9 Solutions” provides a roadmap to a more equitable agricultural future in New York State, but it won't be realized without building meaningful relationships with the member organizations of BFU and individual BIPOC farmers from across New York.**

There is a wealth of knowledge and expertise that exists within the ecosystem of frontline and BIPOC-led organizations, and they are clearly articulating their needs through the “9 Solutions” and other organizational and individual work. New York State is home to some of the leaders in the movement for racial equity in agriculture, such as Soul Fire Farm, The Good Food Buffalo Coalition, The Northeast Farmers of Color Land trust, and the Corbin Hill Food Project just to name a few, many of whom are members of Black Farmers United. **We call on you to continue your engagement and outreach so that the voices of BIPOC thought leaders are elevated and their ideas are reflected in developing policy change for a more just future.**

Sincerely,

Erika Rincon

NY Campaign Organizer

The National Young Farmers Coalition