MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Senate Bill 3873 (Senator May) / Assembly Bill 7104 (Assembly member Buttenschon)

AN ACT TO AMEND THE EDUCATION LAW, IN RELATION TO ESTABLISHING A YOUNG FARMER APPRENTICE PROGRAM

Date: 2/7/2020

New York Farm Bureau, the state’s largest agricultural advocacy organization, respectfully requests your support for this legislation. This bill will allow the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to establish and encourage young farmer apprentice programs.

Currently, the average age for New York farmers is nearly 59 and is expected to increase unless steps are taken to encourage beginning farmers to join the agriculture industry. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, nearly two-thirds of farmland is currently managed by someone over 55 and that number is rising. The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) estimates that over the next five years, nearly 100 million acres of U.S. farmland are expected to change ownership and will need a new farmer.

Farming is a difficult business and there are many barriers to new farmers who might otherwise consider entering the profession, but do not have the knowledge or experience in the business. New York Farm Bureau supports the establishment of regulations enabling farm internship programs that would allow farms to hire farmer trainees or apprentices.

Programs through BOCES would provide the educational needs and on-farm experiences that will be needed by our future farmers. The recent increase in demand for locally grown foods and beverages further highlights the need to assist new farmers entering the profession.

For these reasons, New York Farm Bureau requests your support of this legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.