



**New York Farm Bureau**

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## **MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT**

**Senate Bill 3918 (Senator Ritchie) / Assembly Bill 2185 (Assemblywoman Peoples-Stokes)**

**AN ACT TO AMEND THE STATE FINANCE LAW AND THE AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS LAW, IN RELATION TO ENACTING THE “BUY FROM THE BACKYARD ACT”**

**Date: 4/16/2018**

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This legislation seeks to establish a requirement that state agencies require that not less than 20% of the food products they procure be grown, produced or harvested in New York, or that any processing of these foods take place in New York. New York Farm Bureau, the state’s largest general agricultural advocacy organization, supports the concepts expressed in this legislation and applauds the sponsors’ intent in recognizing that an important component to assisting in the revitalization of our local economy is to assist our farms and food processors.

Our farm families have been involved in efforts to increase the availability and procurement of fresh, locally grown food in our school districts and state agencies for many years. In fact, efforts to procure New York yogurt for New York State prisons was a success story led by the Office of General Services and the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

However, state agencies have traditionally preferred sole source contracts that disadvantage New York’s farms and that is why we do not have a strong history of local procurement. Many obstacles have been identified, including the preference of institutions for already processed food available in large quantities and consistently throughout the year. Because of New York’s shorter growing season, and frankly, the fact that institutions are also generally one of the lower cost, lesser quality markets, New York’s farm families have not always been a good match for supplying the bulk of the food purchased by our state institutions.

While New York farms do supply a great quantity of dairy, dairy products, and a fair amount of apples and apple products to various state agencies, in general they have not historically experienced a great deal of success when dealing with state agencies. These agencies tend to prefer the one-stop shopping experience offered by large food company contracts, which tends to advantage farmers on the West Coast and in more favorable growing regions of the country.

New York Farm Bureau believes that state procurement is an area currently underdeveloped for New York’s farmers and in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets’ recent focus on this effort, we encourage and support the concepts expressed in this legislation.