



Assembly Public Hearing on Local Government Procurement

December 14, 2023

Dear Members of the NYS Legislature,

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY) strongly supports the Good Food NY Bill (S6955 Hinchey/A7264 Peoples-Stokes), which would permit our municipal public institutions to consider if bidders for food contracts that align with a set of values important to our local communities. These values reflect support for local economies, the planet, our bodies, frontline food workers, farm animals, racial equity, and supply chain transparency. It would also allow preference for Minority and Women-Owned Businesses (MWBs).

Founded in 1983, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY) is a member-based, statewide organization dedicated to growing a strong, regenerative organic agriculture movement. NOFA-NY provides education and assistance to local organic and agroecological farmers; connects consumers with local farmers; advocates policies that support a sustainable and fair food and farm system at both the state and federal levels; and is the largest USDA-accredited organic certifier in New York certifying nearly 1,100 organic operations in the state. NOFA-NY strongly supports the Good Food NY bill because it removes barriers that restrict public institutions from purchasing the food they want to serve to their communities, an important first step in enabling values-based procurement in NY.

Public institutions across the country spend billions of dollars of public money every year on food. In New York State, cities purchase enormous amounts of food to feed their residents through schools, hospitals, senior centers, shelters, child care centers, and criminal justice facilities. NYC alone spends half a billion dollars on institutional food and serves 230 million meals annually. In Buffalo, public schools serve 10 million meals and spend \$18 million on school children and communities each year. The choices made on how this money is spent have major impacts on our food system.

Municipalities cannot fully leverage their purchasing power to serve the public good because of New York State procurement laws, which are among the nation's most restrictive. In most circumstances, municipalities are allowed to consider only the "lowest bidder" in making purchasing decisions. To allow municipalities to consider other factors when determining best value, Senator Michelle Hinchey



and Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes have introduced S.6955/A.7264, which seeks to amend General Municipal Law 103. The bill would democratize local, institutional food purchasing decision-making and empower municipalities to invest taxpayer dollars in food purchases that support our local economies; employ environmentally sustainable and animal welfare practices; respect the wellbeing of their workforce; offer nutritious products; and meaningfully achieve racial equity and supplier transparency. Over 100 individuals and organizations from across the state have joined forces to support the Good Food NY Bill because we believe in the power of using our public procurement for the collective good.

By allowing municipalities to engage in values-based procurement, the Good Food NY bill promotes two outcomes: (1) improving the practices of the largest producers and suppliers along the value areas; and (2) expanding access to institutional contracting opportunities for small and midsize farmers, producers, and suppliers.

Passing this bill would be a critical first step towards opening pathways for BIPOC-owned businesses and farmers to access institutional contracts, furthering a racially just food system in NYS. We must ensure that our laws represent the aspirations and values of our government, local institutions, and NYS residents. The Good Food NY Bill will ensure that local governments have the freedom to invest in community values.

Thank you for this opportunity to share NOFA-NY's support for the Good Food NY Bill.

Sincerely,

Katie Baidon

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