

No. 2006-184

AN ACT

SB 1209

Providing for the Healthy Farms and Healthy Schools Program.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Healthy Farms and Healthy Schools Act.

Section 2. Findings and declarations.

The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) An alarming percentage of our school-aged children have an unhealthy weight. In large part, this is due to poor eating habits. Pilot programs have shown that focused nutritional education in the early school years coupled with exposure to a variety of healthy foods can initiate a long-term increase in healthy eating habits as children mature.

(2) Agriculture is this Commonwealth's most successful economic engine. Unfortunately, the percentage of our population directly involved in agriculture has decreased dramatically over the last several decades. Knowledge about the sources of our food and agriculture in Pennsylvania is not widespread in our communities, particularly in less affluent areas. Educational programs for young children providing hands-on experience with agriculture increases an awareness of what constitutes a healthy diet. Thus, it is vital to inform the future citizens of this Commonwealth about good eating habits, while demonstrating the importance of the role of local farms in achieving this crucial goal.

(3) An initiative accomplishing this twofold purpose is decisive in ensuring the citizenry of this Commonwealth will be healthy in the coming years. The purposes of this program are to educate kindergartners and their families about the importance of choosing healthy, locally produced foods and increase awareness of Pennsylvania agriculture. Furthermore, the initiative should aid Pennsylvania farmers in gaining access to new markets within this Commonwealth. Consequently, the Commonwealth should institute a program including:

(i) Nutrition education involving student participation which is integrated into regular subjects in the curriculum of primary and secondary education institutions.

(ii) Focusing on locally grown foods provided from Pennsylvania farms.

(iii) Equipping teachers and other educators to incorporate nutrition and agriculture education into their instruction.

(iv) Providing for new direct marketing opportunities for Pennsylvania farmers.

(v) Providing for family and community involvement, including parent, caregiver and community group participation in education activities.

(vi) Visits to nearby farms for school children so they may understand and learn more about the sources of their food.

Section 3. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Department.” The Department of Agriculture of the Commonwealth.

“Program.” The Healthy Farms and Healthy Schools Program established under this act.

“Secretary.” The Secretary of Agriculture of the Commonwealth.

Section 4. Grant program.

(a) Authorization.—The department, in consultation with the Department of Education and the Department of Health, is authorized to establish a program to award grants for the purpose of developing the Healthy Farms and Healthy Schools Program in kindergarten classes in this Commonwealth.

(b) Eligibility.—Any school district, charter school or private school with a kindergarten program may submit an application to the department for funding.

(c) Program requirements.—The program shall contain the following elements:

(1) A list of Pennsylvania farmers who have agreed to supply food products from Pennsylvania farms, verifiable by the department.

(2) Nutrition and agriculture education, including integration into regular classroom subjects.

(3) Training of teachers and other educational staff on nutrition and agriculture education.

(4) The inclusion of parents, caregivers and community groups in educational activities.

(5) Field trips to Pennsylvania farms or other direct agricultural educational experiences which teach children about sources of food and Pennsylvania agriculture.

Section 5. Limitation on grants.

(a) Matching.—Grant amounts shall be limited to 75% of the amount necessary to develop the program, not to exceed \$15,000 annually, per school. Applicants may use in-kind support to match the amount granted.

(b) Conditions.—The secretary may approve a grant in an amount less than the requested amount. The secretary may also impose restrictions or special conditions upon issuance of the grant.

Section 6. Applications and review of applications.

(a) **Submission.**—Applications for grants shall be submitted in a manner and form as prescribed by the secretary.

(b) **Evaluation.**—When reviewing applications, the secretary shall evaluate applications annually on the basis of all of the following:

(1) The ability of the applicant to complete the program.

(2) The ability of the applicant to incorporate all of the program requirements.

(3) The location of the school in an area where a high percentage of the children receive free or reduced-price school meals.

(4) The potential of the program to increase knowledge about nutrition and healthy eating habits for the children, their caregivers and the community.

(5) The potential of the program to increase knowledge about Pennsylvania agriculture for the children, their caregivers and the community.

(6) The ability of the applicant to procure locally grown foods for their program.

(7) The potential of the program to increase markets for local agricultural producers.

(8) The number of people who will be served by the program.

(9) The ability of the applicant to sustain the program.

(10) The overall performance of the applicant if a grant was received in a previous year.

Section 7. Disposition of grants.

(a) **Written agreement.**—The department may require a written agreement describing the terms and conditions of the grant.

(b) **Verification.**—The department may require verification of grant expenditures.

(c) **Criteria.**—The department may establish criteria under which the secretary may demand the return of all or a portion of the grant funds.

Section 8. Administration and contracting.

Funds appropriated for this program may be used for administrative purposes which execute the program, including contracting with one or more entities to carry out the provisions of this act.

Section 9. Regulations.

The department shall promulgate regulations as it deems necessary to carry out the purposes of this act.

Section 10. Funding.

Grants shall be awarded to the extent funds are made available by the General Assembly.

Section 11. Effective date.

This act shall take effect July 1, 2007.

APPROVED—The 29th day of November, A.D. 2006.

EDWARD G. RENDELL