**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 59‑10‑400 SO AS TO ENACT THE “SOUTH CAROLINA FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM ACT”, TO PROVIDE FOR THE CREATION OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM, TO PROVIDE FOR THE DUTIES OF ITS DIRECTOR, AND TO ESTABLISH A WEBSITE DEDICATED TO PROGRAM INITIATIVES.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. The General Assembly finds that:

(1) farm to school programs link schools with South Carolina farms in order to provide schools with fresh and minimally‑processed farm commodities for inclusion in school meals and snacks, to help children develop healthy eating habits, and to improve South Carolina farmers’ incomes and direct access to markets;

(2) the benefits of farm to school programs include activities that provide students with hands‑on learning opportunities, such as farm visits, cooking demonstrations, and school gardening and composting programs, and integrate nutrition and agriculture education into school curricula;

(3) school districts should encourage the implementation of the South Carolina Farm to School Program, which emphasizes the purchase of locally and regionally produced foods in order to improve child nutrition and strengthen local and regional farm economies; and

(4) a successful South Carolina Farm to School Program requires the resources, expertise, and collaboration of a number of state agencies, including the State Department of Education, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Health and Environmental Control.

SECTION 2. Article 3, Chapter 10, Title 59 is amended by adding:

“Section 59‑10‑400. (A) There is created the South Carolina Farm to School Program within the South Carolina Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the South Carolina Farm to School Program is to foster a direct relationship between South Carolina farms and schools to provide schools with fresh and minimally‑processed foods for student consumption.

(B) The Department of Agriculture shall employ a director to administer and monitor the programs and activities of the South Carolina Farm to School Program with the advice and guidance of a nonprofit food policy council chosen by the Department of Agriculture. Duties of the director of the South Carolina Farm to School Program include, but are not limited to:

(1) identifying and promoting critical components of individual farm to school programs and advising agencies on needed actions and strategies to implement the South Carolina Farm to School Program;

(2) establishing a partnership with public and nonprofit sources to implement a public engagement campaign and establishing a structure to facilitate communication between farmers and school districts;

(3) providing leadership at the state level to encourage school districts to develop and improve school nutrition plans using locally grown farm fresh products;

(4) conducting workshops, training sessions, and technical assistance to school food services directors, personnel, farmers, and produce distributors and processors regarding the demand for and the availability of South Carolina farm products;

(5) consulting with staff of the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health and Environmental Control, and the State Department of Education as to the implementation of the program; and

(6) seeking grants from private donations and other funding sources.

(C) The Department of Agriculture must establish a South Carolina Farm to School Program website. A direct link to the program website must be maintained on the home pages of the State Department of Education and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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