

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 4531

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 9, 2025

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 4531.

As reported, this bill appropriates \$52,798,268 from various farmland preservation funds to the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) for certain farmland preservation purposes.

Of the funding provided by the bill, \$21,046,028 is appropriated to the SADC to pay the cost of acquisition by the SADC of development easements on, or fee simple titles to, farmland, to provide grants to counties and municipalities for up to 80 percent of the cost of acquisition of fee simple titles to farmland, and to provide grants to qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organizations for up to 50 percent of the cost of acquisition of fee simple titles to farmland, for farmland preservation purposes for projects approved as eligible for such funding pursuant to: the “Agricultural Retention and Development Act”; the “Green Acres, Farmland and Historic Preservation, and Blue Acres Bond Act of 1995”; the “Garden State Preservation Trust Act”; the “Green Acres, Farmland, Blue Acres, and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 2007”; the “Green Acres, Water Supply and Floodplain Protection, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 2009”; and the “Preserve New Jersey Act.”

In addition, this bill appropriates \$3,452,240 from the “Preserve New Jersey Farmland Preservation Fund” to the SADC for the purpose of providing stewardship grants for activities, beyond routine operation and maintenance, undertaken by landowners, or farm operators as agents for landowners, to repair, restore, or improve lands preserved for farmland preservation purposes, including but not limited to, soil and water conservation project activities and deer-fencing activities.

The appropriations in this bill for the acquisition of fee simple titles and development easements to farmland and for stewardship grants have been approved by the SADC and the Garden State Preservation Trust.

The bill also appropriates to the SADC such sums from any additional proceeds which may become available by the effective date of the bill due to the lease or conveyance of farmland previously acquired in fee simple by the SADC, for the purpose of providing for the cost of acquisition by the SADC of development easements and fee simple titles to farmland for farmland preservation purposes.

This bill also appropriates from the “Preserve New Jersey Farmland Preservation Fund” to the SADC: \$25,000,000 for organizational, administrative, and other work and services, including salaries, equipment, materials, and services necessary to administer the applicable provisions of the “Preserve New Jersey Act”; \$2,000,000 for costs associated with administering the direct easement program; \$800,000 for organizational, administrative and other work and services necessary to administer the Garden State Preservation Trust; and \$500,000 for the costs associated with legal advice and representation in connection with the committee’s enforcement of development easements acquired for farmland preservation purposes pursuant to P.L.2016, c.12 (C.13:8C-43 et seq.).

The “Preserve New Jersey Act,” P.L.2016, c.12 (C.13:8C-43 et seq.), implements the constitutional dedication of CBT revenues pursuant to Article VIII, Section II, paragraph 6 of the State Constitution, approved by the voters of the State in November 2014, for open space, farmland, and historic preservation. The “Preserve New Jersey Farmland Preservation Fund” was established pursuant to section 8 of the “Preserve New Jersey Act.” Of the funding in this bill, \$51,616,360 is from these constitutionally dedicated CBT revenues.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This bill is not certified as requiring a fiscal note.