AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LOCAL FOOD FOR SCHOOLS INCENTIVE PROGRAM AND EXPANSION OF THE CT GROWN FOR CT KIDS GRANT PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2023) (a) As used in this section:

1. "Local farm" means a farm, farmers' cooperative, food hub or wholesale distributor located in Connecticut.

2. "Regional farm" means a farm, farmers' cooperative, food hub or wholesale distributor located in New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire or Maine.

3. "Locally sourced food" means food grown or produced at, or sold by, a local farm and includes, but is not limited to, value-added dairy, fish, pork, beef, poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables and minimally processed foods.

4. "Regionally sourced food" means food grown or produced at, or sold by, a regional farm and includes, but is not limited to, value-added dairy, fish, pork, beef, poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables and minimally processed foods.

5. "Eligible board of education" means a local or regional board of education that is participating in the National School Lunch Program.
(6) "Eligible meal program" means a meal program provided by an eligible board of education to its students or a meal provided as part of such board's participation in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Seamless Summer Option, After School Snack Program, Summer Food Service Program or the At-Risk Afterschool Meals component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture.

(b) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, shall administer the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program. Such program shall provide reimbursement payments to eligible boards of education for the purchase of locally sourced food and regionally sourced food that may be used as part of such board's participation in an eligible meal program. An eligible board of education shall be entitled to receive reimbursement payments in accordance with the guidelines developed pursuant to subsection (e) of this section and in an amount equal to (1) one-half of such board's expenditures for locally sourced foods, and (2) one-third of such board's expenditures for regionally sourced foods.

(c) (1) The department shall receive requests from eligible boards of education for reimbursement payments under the program in a manner similar to how the department receives applications under section 10-215b of the general statutes.

(2) Each eligible board of education shall (A) maintain a record of such board's expenditures for all locally sourced food and regionally sourced food, as well as documentation confirming the place of origin of such food, as prescribed by the department, and (B) submit, upon request of the department, such records and documentation to the department for review.

(d) Any locally sourced food or regionally sourced food for which an eligible board of education seeks reimbursement payments under
this section, shall comply with the nutrition standards established by the department pursuant to section 10-215e of the general statutes.

(e) The department shall develop guidelines for the implementation of the program. Such guidelines shall (1) establish a maximum reimbursement amount based on total student enrollment for each eligible board of education, (2) assist eligible boards of education in participating in the program, and (3) promote geographic, social, economic and racial equity, which may include a preference for socially disadvantaged farmers, as defined in 7 USC 2279(a), as amended from time to time, or small farm businesses.

(f) The department shall develop a survey to be distributed annually to any eligible board of education that receives reimbursement payments under this section. Such survey shall be designed to collect information to assist the department in implementing and improving the program.

(g) In addition to the reimbursement payments otherwise provided pursuant to this section, the department may, within available appropriations, provide supplemental grants to eligible boards of education. Such supplemental grant funds may be expended for the purpose of purchasing kitchen equipment, engaging with school nutrition or farm-to-school consultants or training relating to the processing, preparation and serving of locally sourced food and regionally sourced food. In awarding supplemental grants under this subsection, the department shall give priority to an eligible board of education for a town designated as an alliance district pursuant to section 10-262u of the general statutes.

(h) The department may accept gifts, grants and donations, including in-kind donations, for the administration of the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program and to implement the provisions of this section.

(i) Any unexpended funds appropriated for purposes of this section
shall not lapse at the end of the fiscal year but shall be available for expenditure during the next fiscal year.

(j) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, and each fiscal year thereafter, the amount of reimbursement payments payable to eligible boards of education shall be reduced proportionately if the total of such reimbursement payments in such year exceeds the amount appropriated for such reimbursement payments for such year.

(k) Not later than January 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, the department shall submit a report on the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes. Such report shall include, but need not be limited to, an accounting of the funds appropriated and received by the department for the program, descriptions of the reimbursement payments made under the program and an evaluation of the program.

Sec. 2. (Effective July 1, 2023) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, the Department of Education shall hire two full-time employees to administer the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program described in section 1 of this act. Such employees shall be responsible for (1) identifying and promoting the critical components of individual farm-to-school programs and advising the Commissioner of Education on strategies to implement the program, (2) supporting partnerships with public and nonprofit organizations to establish a structure to facilitate communication between farmers and school district officials, (3) conducting workshops, training sessions and technical assistance to school food service directors, school personnel, farmers, produce distributors and processors regarding the demand for and availability of Connecticut farm products, and (4) identifying grants, donations and other funding sources to assist in funding the program.

Sec. 3. (Effective July 1, 2023) The sum of three hundred thousand
dollars is appropriated to the Department of Education from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, for (1) the development of the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program described in section 1 of this act, (2) the hiring of two full-time employees described in section 2 of this act, and (3) entering into contracts for program evaluation and the provision of technical assistance to eligible boards of education and local farms, as such terms are defined in section 1 of this act.

Sec. 4. (Effective July 1, 2024) The sum of one million five hundred dollars is appropriated to the Department of Education from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, for the administration of the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program described in section 1 of this act, provided two hundred fifty thousand dollars of such appropriated funds shall be used for supplemental grants described in subsection (g) of section 1 of this act.

Sec. 5. (Effective July 1, 2023) The sum of one million dollars is appropriated to the Department of Agriculture from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, for administration of the CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program described in section 10-215l of the general statutes.

Sec. 6. (Effective July 1, 2024) The sum of one million dollars is appropriated to the Department of Agriculture from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, for administration of the CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program described in section 10-215l of the general statutes.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

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**ED** Joint Favorable Subst. C/R APP