

SENATE BILL 674

By Gilmore

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 43
and Title 49, relative to agriculture education.

WHEREAS, there are many benefits to increasing the number of farmers in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the census has shown that the number of farmers in the state of Tennessee has decreased; and

WHEREAS, increasing agriculture education, especially in rural areas of this state, will increase job opportunities that will allow families to prosper in their hometowns while providing much needed products to residents across the state of Tennessee and boosting the state's economy; and

WHEREAS, connecting students with members of the community, including local farmers and organizations focused on providing youth the skills to create a business and career in agriculture, can enhance communities, both socially and economically, and provide the next generation with valuable skills; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 4, Part 7, is amended by adding the following language as a new section:

(a) There is established a four-year agriculture education pilot project to be administered by the department of education. The purpose of the pilot project is to provide agriculture education to students in grades ten (10), eleven (11), and twelve (12), and to provide those students with knowledge on how to use agricultural skills toward starting a business based in agriculture. The department of education may consult with the department of agriculture to implement the pilot project.

(b) The department shall create an educational program focused on agriculture education. The program shall:

(1) Provide students information on the benefits of agriculture education;

(2) Partner with agricultural farmers, business owners, and organizations around the state to provide hands-on opportunities to students participating in the pilot project for purposes of gaining skills that will be useful in careers in agriculture;

(3) Provide students information on dual enrollment courses at state institutions of higher education that will be useful in starting a career or business in an agricultural field, and assist students in applying for those courses and the dual enrollment grant provided by § 49-4-930; and

(4) Assist students in setting career goals to achieve a career in agriculture.

(c) The department shall create an application process for students in grades ten (10), eleven (11), and twelve (12) to apply for the program. No more than twenty (20) students in each grand division may participate in the program each school year. The department may give preference to students who are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch.

(d) The department may partner with community members, local farmers, state institutions of higher education, and organizations focused on training youth on how to start businesses in agriculture, such as the Hip Hop Farmers Youth Initiative, to provide students the opportunity to gain hands-on learning experience in an agricultural field and to connect students with members of the agricultural community in the students' geographical area.

(e) The state shall not obligate or expend funds to implement or administer this section. The department of education shall apply for grants and funds, including, but not limited to, United States department of agriculture grants and education grants available

from the federal government and other sources to fund the pilot project created by this section. The pilot project must be funded solely by grants and funds received from the federal government and any other sources.

(f) The office of research and accountability (OREA) in the office of the comptroller of the treasury, with the assistance of the department of education, shall study the pilot project and report on the effectiveness of the pilot project to encourage students to seek education in agriculture. The OREA shall make recommendations as to whether the pilot project should be expanded and shall submit the report to the education committees of the senate and the house of representatives by July 1, 2023.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring

it.