

January 29, 2010

Senator Darrel J Aubertine
903 Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

On behalf of the members of the NYS Association of Agricultural Fairs (NYSAAF), we respectfully request continued funding in the budget of vital “premium dollars” for agricultural programs at county fairs in New York State.

NYSAAF represents 55 fairs comprised of 44 county fairs, 10 youth fairs and the Great New York State Fair. Thousands of volunteers, who are residents of New York State, give up their time and talents to produce these fairs annually. In addition, county fairs are a source of employment for an equally large number of individuals. Fairs are a major economic factor in the local communities they serve.

County fairs remain one of the last critical linkages between our agricultural heritage and today’s urban based society. The agricultural exhibits, activities and programs during fair week are the only opportunities for the vast majority of non-farm families to learn about and come to appreciate their connection and relevancy to today’s agricultural world.

Premium dollars for county fairs go a long way in promoting agricultural exhibits and providing competitive youth programs. Without the continued funding, the various events and programs that provide education to the non-farm public would decline or become non-existent due to the inability of county fairs to provide financial incentives for the many hours of hard work and practice required to compete. In addition, elimination of state premium dollars will directly impact 4-H and FFA programs, cattle clubs and home bureaus; all of whom depend on the state funded premiums to encourage participation and offset costs.

The current funding level for premium dollars of \$453,000.00 allows fairs to reward winners of agricultural exhibits, and to ultimately ensure the future success of the fair industry.

Sincerely,