

AN ACT concerning agriculture.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Illinois AgrAbility Act.

Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly finds the following:

(1) Illinois is one of the leading agricultural-producing states in the nation. By being involved in such a diverse and highly mechanized industry, the more than 500,000 agricultural workers in Illinois are susceptible to any one of a number of work-related injuries and chronic health problems that limit an individual's ability to safely continue farming.

(2) Available estimates indicate that, each year in Illinois, more than 200 farm workers sustain injuries, which result in permanent physical disabilities affecting their future income.

(3) It is estimated that nationwide more than 200,000 farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers experience injuries that result in lost work time. Of these injuries, 5% have serious or permanent results.

(4) According to the most recent census data, approximately 5,000 Illinois farmers have permanent disabilities as a result of accidents, health related ailments, and age.

(5) Farm operators and workers are typically highly skilled individuals and the loss of these individuals to a disability negatively impacts the Illinois farm economy. The AgrAbility Project established by the U. S. Department of Agriculture has been successful in helping agricultural workers who suffer from a disability continue to farm. A

similar program established by the State and working with the existing AgrAbility Unlimited Program will assist even more Illinois citizens in receiving the assistance that they need and will benefit the State agriculture industry.

Section 10. Definitions. As used in this Act:

"AgrAbility Unlimited" means the joint program of the University of Illinois Extension and the Easter Seals of Central Illinois established in accordance with the AgrAbility Program established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Department" means the Department of Agriculture.

"Director" means the Director of Agriculture.

"Production agriculture" has the meaning set forth in Section 3-35 of the Use Tax Act.

Section 15. Illinois AgrAbility Program established.

(a) Subject to appropriation, the Department, in cooperation with the University of Illinois Extension, shall contract with a non-profit disability service provider or other entity that assists disabled farmers, to establish and administer the Illinois AgrAbility Program in order to assist individuals who are engaged in farming or an agriculture-related activity and who have been affected by disability.

(b) Services provided by the Illinois AgrAbility Program shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) A toll-free information and referral hotline.

(2) The establishment of networks with local agricultural and rehabilitation professionals.

(3) The coordination of community resources.

(4) The establishment of networks with local agricultural and health care professionals to help identify individuals who may be eligible for assistance and to help identify the best method of providing that assistance.

(5) The provision of information on and assistance

regarding equipment modification.

(6) Job restructuring.

(7) The provision of information on and assistance regarding the development of alternative jobs.

In order to provide these services, the Illinois AgrAbility Program shall cooperate and share resources, facilities, and employees with AgrAbility Unlimited, the University of Illinois Extension, and the Office of Rehabilitation Services of the Department of Human Services.

The costs of the program, including any related administrative expenses from the Department, may be paid from any funds specifically appropriated or otherwise available to the Department for that purpose. The Department may pay the costs of the Illinois AgrAbility program by making grants to the operating entity, by making grants directly to service providers, by paying reimbursements for services provided, or in any other appropriate manner.

(c) The Department has the power to enter into any agreements that are necessary and appropriate for the establishment, operation, and funding of the Illinois AgrAbility Program. The Department may adopt any rules that it determines necessary for the establishment, operation, and funding of the Illinois AgrAbility Program.

Section 20. Eligibility. To be eligible to receive assistance under this Act, an individual must meet all of the following:

(1) Be a resident of Illinois.

(2) Derive at least a portion of his or her income from production agriculture.

(3) Be affected by a disability.

(4) Meet any additional eligibility requirements set forth by the Department, in conjunction with the University of Illinois Extension.

Section 25. The Illinois AgrAbility Fund.

(a) The Illinois AgrAbility Fund is created as a special appropriated fund within the State treasury. The Director shall also accept and deposit into the Fund all gifts, grants, transfers, and other amounts from any legal source, public or private, that are designated for deposit into the Fund. All interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall be deposited into the Fund.

(b) Subject to appropriation and as directed by the Director, moneys in the Illinois AgrAbility Fund may be expended for the Illinois AgrAbility Program and for no other purpose. No more than 15% of the moneys expended in a fiscal year for the Program may be expended for administrative costs.

Section 30. Reports. Unless otherwise required by federal law, the University of Illinois Extension must provide the Department with a copy of any report or other document that it provides to the U.S. Department of Agriculture concerning AgrAbility Unlimited. The non-profit disability service provider or other entity awarded a contract under Section 15 must annually up-date the University of Illinois Extension and the Department in writing on the status of the Illinois AgrAbility Program.

Section 95. The State Finance Act is amended by adding Section 5.640 as follows:

(30 ILCS 105/5.640 new)

Sec. 5.640. The Illinois AgrAbility Fund.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.