**RESOLUTION # 10**

**SENATE AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NUTRITION COMMITTEE**

**WHEREAS,** agriculture has long been an industry closely associated with New Jersey’s identity, as evidenced by the official nickname of “The Garden State,” the choosing of the horse as the state animal and the choosing of a primary pollinator, the honeybee, as the state insect; and

**WHEREAS,** agriculture continues to be a significant component of the state’s economy, with agriculture and its related food industries in New Jersey estimated to contribute more than $138.5 billion annually to New Jersey’s economy; and

**WHEREAS**, New Jersey and its political subdivisions have, over the years, invested in excess of $1.5 billion to preserve farmland and the benefits agriculture provides to the state and its citizens; and

**WHEREAS**, New Jersey residents overwhelmingly approved a ballot question changing the State Constitution to redirect funds to the preservation of farmland and open space, again indicating the high priority New Jersey residents place on preservation; and

**WHEREAS,** approximately 20 percent of New Jersey’s land is owned, managed, cared for and kept productive by the agriculture sector; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey agricultural sector, while being a substantial portion of New Jersey’s economy and while managing approximately 20 percent of New Jersey’s land base, providing a safe and nutritious food supply, and at the same time enhancing New Jersey’s quality of life through its scenic vistas, protection of the environment, and preservation of a way of life and sense of wellbeing grounded in a cultural heritage treasured by New Jersey’s citizens, must exist within a framework of laws and regulations necessary to accommodate the varied and sometimes competing interests which exist in the most densely populated state in the nation; and

**WHEREAS**, the business of agriculture has grown increasingly complex in terms of science, technology, environmental interrelationships, economic impacts and sophistication, and social interaction and impact and, as a result, legislation and regulation impacting it has become increasingly complex; and

**WHEREAS**, the importance of agriculture to so many facets of New Jersey life is reflected in New Jersey’s adopting planning objectives that call for “planning for agriculture” instead of “planning around agriculture”; and

**WHEREAS**, issues that impact agriculture also can have concurrent and equally important impacts to areas of life involving food, natural resources, and the overall well-being of the state’s nine million-plus residents; and

**WHEREAS**, the intrusion of suburbia into agricultural areas, and issues created by that expanded interface create a need for balance and regulating in a way that meets the needs of an expanding urban and suburban population while ensuring that agriculture continues to be able to provide New Jersey with the vital benefits it is uniquely able to supply; and

**WHEREAS,** in the 2022-2023 legislative session to date, hundreds of bills affecting agriculture and related food businesses were introduced in the Senate; and

**WHEREAS,** New Jersey has not had a Senate committee devoted solely to agriculture since 1980; and

**WHEREAS**, the Assembly has an Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, which routinely considers legislation impacting the agricultural sector, and which is composed largely of legislators with high concentrations of agriculture and related industries in their district or who otherwise have a keen interest in and/or understanding of agricultural issues as they relate to all areas of the state; and

**WHEREAS**, because of the increased importance of agriculture and its increased interdependence with so many aspects of the health and wellbeing of New Jersey and its citizens, and because state-level legislation and policy-making can have direct impacts, both positive and negative, upon the farm viability of the agricultural industry, it is appropriate for

there to be a standing committee in the New Jersey Senate to deal with matters impacting this vital segment of New Jersey’s existence.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 109th State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2024, do hereby call upon the New Jersey Senate to establish an Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Committee as a standing committee.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that, upon the establishment of such a committee, we urge serious consideration be given to the knowledge, familiarity, and interest of each member regarding agriculture before their selection to serve on this committee.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that until a Senate Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Committee is established, we urge New Jersey Farm Bureau and other agricultural advocacy groups to continue working with the Senate’s existing committees to ensure that agriculture-related bills are taken up regularly.