

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2636

To amend the Research Facilities Act and the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 to address deferred maintenance at agricultural research facilities, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUGUST 5, 2021

Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. KING, Ms. SMITH, Mr. MERKLEY, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To amend the Research Facilities Act and the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 to address deferred maintenance at agricultural research facilities, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “AuGmenting Research
5 and Educational Sites to Ensure Agriculture Remains
6 Cutting-edge and Helpful Act” or the “AG RESEARCH
7 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FACILITIES.**

2 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

3 (1) in 2019, agriculture and related indus-
4 tries—

5 (A) contributed \$1,109,000,000,000 to the
6 gross domestic product of the United States
7 (5.2 percent of the total gross domestic product
8 of the United States); and

9 (B) provided 22,200,000 jobs domestically
10 (10.9 percent of total employment in the United
11 States);

12 (2) the Department of Agriculture funds more
13 than \$1,600,000,000 in research funding each year
14 to schools of agriculture;

15 (3) a study published in 2015 found that de-
16 ferred maintenance needs at 91 schools of agri-
17 culture across the United States totaled
18 \$8,400,000,000, with a total replacement cost of
19 \$29,000,000,000;

20 (4) a study published in 2021 found that de-
21 ferred maintenance needs at schools of agriculture
22 across the United States had increased to
23 \$11,500,000,000, with a total replacement cost of
24 \$38,100,000,000; and

1 (5) infrastructure investments must be made at
 2 schools of agriculture to ensure that United States
 3 agricultural research remains globally competitive.

4 (b) EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS.—Section 3(d) of
 5 the Research Facilities Act (7 U.S.C. 390a(d)) is amend-
 6 ed—

7 (1) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (2) as
 8 paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively; and

9 (2) by inserting before paragraph (2) (as so re-
 10 designated) the following:

11 “(1) review the proposal in consultation with
 12 representatives of National Institute of Food and
 13 Agriculture peer review panels;”.

14 (c) GRANTS FOR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FACILI-
 15 TIES.—Section 4 of the Research Facilities Act (7 U.S.C.
 16 390b) is amended to read as follows:

17 **“SEC. 4. GRANTS FOR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FACILI-**
 18 **TIES.**

19 “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to as-
 20 sist agricultural research facilities in efforts to alter or re-
 21 pair those facilities or equipment of the facilities necessary
 22 for conducting agricultural research.

23 “(b) GRANT PROGRAM.—

24 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall estab-
 25 lish in the National Institute of Food and Agri-

1 culture a competitive grant program to provide to
 2 agricultural research facilities the Federal share of
 3 the cost of the construction, alteration, acquisition,
 4 modernization, renovation, or remodeling of—

5 “(A) the agricultural research facilities; or

6 “(B) equipment of the agricultural re-
 7 search facilities necessary for conducting agri-
 8 cultural research.

9 “(2) SECRETARIAL WAIVER.—Notwithstanding
 10 section 3(c)(2)(A), the Secretary may provide that
 11 the Federal share described in paragraph (1) is up
 12 to 100 percent of the costs described in that para-
 13 graph on a case-by-case basis, as the Secretary de-
 14 termines to be appropriate.

15 “(c) REQUIREMENTS.—

16 “(1) AMOUNT; TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—
 17 Grants awarded under this section shall be in such
 18 amounts and under such terms and conditions as
 19 the Secretary determines are necessary to carry out
 20 the purpose of this section.

21 “(2) EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.—To the max-
 22 imum extent practicable, grants shall be awarded
 23 under this section to ensure—

24 “(A) an equitable geographic distribution
 25 of funds;

1 “(B) an equitable distribution of funds to
2 diverse institutions; and

3 “(C) an equitable distribution of funds to
4 agricultural research facilities of various sizes.

5 “(3) LIMITATION.—Not greater than 20 per-
6 cent of amounts made available to carry out this sec-
7 tion shall be awarded to projects in any 1 State.

8 “(4) ADMINISTRATION.—In carrying out this
9 section, the Secretary shall establish procedures
10 for—

11 “(A) the submission of proposals for com-
12 petitive grants; and

13 “(B) in consultation with representatives
14 of National Institute of Food and Agriculture
15 peer review panels, the review and selection of
16 proposals submitted under subparagraph (A).”.

17 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section
18 6 of the Research Facilities Act (7 U.S.C. 390d) is amend-
19 ed—

20 (1) in subsection (a), in the first sentence, by
21 striking “2023” and inserting “2026”; and

22 (2) in subsection (b), by inserting “Federal” be-
23 fore “administration”.

1 **SEC. 3. AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTERS.**

2 (a) FINDING.—Congress finds that the Agricultural
3 Research Service Capital Investment Strategy dated April
4 2012 indicates that research facilities of the Agricultural
5 Research Services have more than \$1,000,000,000 in de-
6 ferred maintenance.

7 (b) DIRECT FUNDING FOR DEFERRED MAINTENANCE AT ARS RESEARCH FACILITIES.—Title IV of the
8 Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform
9 Act of 1998 is amended by inserting before section 404
10 (7 U.S.C. 7624) the following:
11

12 **“SEC. 401. DIRECT FUNDING FOR DEFERRED MAINTENANCE AT ARS RESEARCH FACILITIES.**
13

14 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Using amounts made available
15 under subsection (c), the Secretary shall provide direct
16 payments to research facilities of the Agricultural Re-
17 search Service for the purpose of addressing deferred
18 maintenance.

19 “(b) PRIORITY.—In providing direct payments under
20 subsection (a), the Secretary shall give priority to the most
21 critical structures in accordance with the Agricultural Re-
22 search Service Capital Investment Strategy dated April
23 2012.

24 “(c) FUNDING.—Of the funds of the Commodity
25 Credit Corporation, the Secretary shall use to carry out

- 1 this section \$200,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022
- 2 through 2026.”.

