

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4529

To increase market access for Black farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, to ensure civil rights accountability, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 17, 2025

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia (for himself, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. BISHOP, Ms. BROWN, Mr. CARSON, Mr. CARTER of Louisiana, Mr. COHEN, Mr. FIELDS, Mr. FIGURES, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Ms. McCLELLAN, Ms. SEWELL, Mr. SOTO, Ms. STRICKLAND, Mr. THANEDAR, Ms. TOKUDA, Ms. WATERS, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, Ms. WILSON of Florida, and Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To increase market access for Black farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, to ensure civil rights accountability, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Black Farmers and
3 Socially Disadvantaged Farmers Increased Market Share
4 Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. FOOD HUB GRANTS TO INCREASE MARKET ACCESS**
6 **FOR SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMERS**
7 **AND RANCHERS.**

8 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 (1) AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCT.—The term
10 “agricultural food product” means a raw, cooked, or
11 a processed edible substance, beverage, or ingredient
12 produced and otherwise prepared for sale in the
13 United States (including any insular area (as de-
14 fined in section 1404 of the National Agricultural,
15 Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of
16 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3103))), derived from one or more
17 agricultural commodities of United States origin,
18 and used or intended for use or for sale in whole or
19 in part for human consumption.

20 (2) DONATED FOOD.—The term “donated
21 food” has the meaning given the term in section
22 250.2 of title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations
23 (or any successor regulation).

24 (3) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
25 ty” means—

1 (A) an entity formed by two or more agri-
2 cultural producers, not less than half of whom
3 are members of a socially disadvantaged group;
4 or

5 (B) a non-profit organization or Tribal or-
6 ganization with demonstrated experience work-
7 ing with socially disadvantaged farmers or
8 ranchers.

9 (4) ELIGIBLE PARTNER.—The term “eligible
10 partner” means a non-profit organization, a State
11 cooperative extension service or a college or univer-
12 sity (as such terms are defined in section 1404 of
13 the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and
14 Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3103)), Trib-
15 al organization, or other State or local government
16 entities with demonstrated experience in providing
17 assistance such as grants management, technical as-
18 sistance, and business plan development, to agricul-
19 tural producers.

20 (5) FOOD HUB.—The term “food hub” means
21 a business or organization that actively manages the
22 aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-
23 identified agricultural food products from producers
24 for wholesale, retail, or institutional markets.

1 (6) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
2 the Secretary of Agriculture.

3 (7) SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMER OR
4 RANCHER.—The term “socially disadvantaged farm-
5 er or rancher” has the meaning given the term in
6 section 2501(a) of the Food, Agriculture, Conserva-
7 tion, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 2279(a)).

8 (8) SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUP.—The
9 term “socially disadvantaged group” has the mean-
10 ing given the term in section 2501(a) of the Food,
11 Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7
12 U.S.C. 2279(a)).

13 (9) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term “Tribal
14 organization” has the meaning given the term in
15 section 3 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7
16 U.S.C. 2012).

17 (b) GRANTS TO INCREASE MARKET ACCESS.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish
19 a program to make grants on a competitive basis to
20 eligible entities to support new or expanding food
21 hubs designed to increase market access for socially
22 disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, but may also
23 increase market access for other farmers and ranch-
24 ers.

1 (2) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity selected
2 to receive a grants under this subsection may use
3 grants funds—

4 (A) to purchase and develop land, build-
5 ings, and associated infrastructure for commer-
6 cial or industrial properties, including expansion
7 or modernization, for use in processing, distrib-
8 uting, aggregating, storing, transporting, or
9 marketing agricultural food products;

10 (B) to construct or equip facilities for use
11 in processing, distributing, aggregating, storing,
12 transporting, or marketing agricultural food
13 products;

14 (C) to purchase machinery and equipment
15 for use in processing, distributing, aggregating,
16 storing, transporting, or marketing agricultural
17 food products;

18 (D) for general operating expenses directly
19 related to a food hub, including planning and
20 development related to the establishment or ex-
21 pansion of any food hub;

22 (E) to provide marketing services for agri-
23 cultural food products, including providing plat-
24 forms (such as electronic or web-based plat-

forms) for sales, inventory, and aggregation;
and

(F) to conduct other activities supporting
the development or expansion of a food hub, as
determined by the Secretary.

(3) APPLICATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity seeking a grant under this subsection shall submit to the Secretary an application that contains—

(i) a description of the activities the eligible entity will carry out to support one or more new or existing food hubs, including a plan for each such food hub to process, distribute, store, or market agricultural food products for wholesale, retail, or institutional markets;

(ii) a description of the ways in which each such food hub that the eligible entity is proposing to establish or expand is designed to increase market access for socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers;

(iii) except as provided in subparagraph (B), a description of the eligible entity's demonstrated competency to develop and manage each such food hub, provide

1 fiscal accountability, collect data, and pre-
2 pare reports and other necessary docu-
3 mentation; and

4 (iv) any other information, as deter-
5 mined by the Secretary.

6 (B) REQUIREMENT TO INCLUDE ELIGIBLE
7 PARTNERS.—An eligible entity that does not
8 have one or more of the demonstrated com-
9 petencies described in clause (iii) of subpara-
10 graph (A) shall submit to the Secretary in its
11 application—

12 (i) a list of one or more eligible part-
13 ners such eligible entity is partnering with;

14 (ii) the responsibilities of each eligible
15 partner in supporting such eligible entity;
16 and

17 (iii) a description of the demonstrated
18 competencies of the eligible partner or
19 partners in performing such responsibil-
20 ities.

21 (C) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES SERVING AS ELI-
22 GIBLE PARTNERS.—An eligible entity specified
23 in subparagraph (B) of subsection (a)(3) seek-
24 ing a grant under this section may serve as an
25 eligible partner for other eligible entities in one

1 or more grant applications under this sub-
2 section.

3 (4) PRIORITY.—In making grants under this
4 subsection, the Secretary may give priority to grant
5 applications for food hubs that—

6 (A) benefit underserved communities, as
7 defined in section 310B(g)(9)(A)(ii) of the Con-
8 solidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7
9 U.S.C. 1932(g)(9)(A)(ii));

10 (B) aggregate, distribute, and market agri-
11 cultural food products that meet the standards
12 for donated foods, as determined by the Sec-
13 retary; or

14 (C) have not been awarded a Department
15 of Agriculture grant, including a grant under
16 section 210A of the Agricultural Marketing Act
17 of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1627c), in the preceding or
18 current fiscal year.

19 (5) MAXIMUM GRANT TERM.—The term of a
20 grant under this subsection may not exceed 5 years.

21 (6) NO MATCHING FUNDS.—An eligible entity
22 receiving a grant under this section shall not be re-
23 quired to provide non-Federal matching funds with
24 respect to such grant.

1 (c) PRIORITIZING PURCHASES FOR USDA DOMESTIC
2 FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish
4 a process—

5 (A) to prioritize the purchase of agricul-
6 tural food products from socially disadvantaged
7 farmers and ranchers, including from food hubs
8 developed or expanded under this section, for
9 use in Department of Agriculture programs
10 that distribute agricultural food products within
11 the United States (including any insular area
12 (as defined in section 1404 of the National Ag-
13 ricultural, Research, Extension, and Teaching
14 Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3103))); and

15 (B) that is designed to account for barriers
16 to market entry faced by socially disadvantaged
17 farmers and ranchers while maintaining the in-
18 tegrity of the purchasing process established
19 under this subsection, including ensuring that
20 any entity that is suspended or debarred from
21 participation in any Federal program is not eli-
22 gible to participate in the purchasing process
23 established under this subsection.

24 (2) WAIVERS.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—In establishing the
2 process described in paragraph (1), the Sec-
3 retary may provide for the waiver of the full
4 and open competition procedures for the award
5 of Federal contracts, section 3324 of title 31,
6 United States Code, and section 725 of the Ag-
7 riculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug
8 Administration, and Related Agencies Appro-
9 priations Act, 2001 (7 U.S.C. 2209f), if the
10 Secretary identifies requirements under such
11 sections and procedures as presenting barriers
12 to market entry for socially disadvantaged
13 farmers and ranchers.

14 (B) NOTIFICATION.—Not later than 10
15 days after providing for any waiver under sub-
16 paragraph (A), the Secretary shall notify the
17 Committee on Agriculture of the House of Rep-
18 resentatives and the Committee on Agriculture,
19 Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate of such
20 waivers and provide a description of how such
21 waivers would address barriers to market entry
22 for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
23 for a particular agricultural food product.

24 (d) REPORTS.—Not later than December 31, 2026,
25 and each December thereafter until the completion of the

1 grants awarded under subsection (b), the Secretary shall
2 make publicly available on the Department of Agri-
3 culture's website and submit to the Committee on Agri-
4 culture of the House of Representatives and the Com-
5 mittee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Sen-
6 ate, a report that includes—

7 (1) a description of the status of each grant
8 awarded under subsection (b);

9 (2) the number of socially disadvantaged farm-
10 ers and ranchers participating in the food hub sup-
11 ported by such grant in the previous fiscal year;

12 (3) to the maximum extent practicable, the
13 amount of agricultural food products produced by
14 socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers proc-
15 essed, distributed, aggregated, stored, or marketed
16 by the food hub supported by such grant in the pre-
17 vious fiscal year; and

18 (4) the total amount of donated food purchased
19 by the Secretary from food hubs supported with
20 grants awarded under this section in the previous
21 fiscal year.

22 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
23 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out subsection
24 (b) \$100,000,000 for fiscal year 2026, to remain available
25 until expended.

1 **SEC. 3. AGRICULTURE HUB CREDIT.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subpart D of part IV of sub-
3 chapter A of chapter 1 of the Internal Revenue Code of
4 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new
5 section:

6 **“SEC. 45U. AGRICULTURE HUB CREDIT.**

7 “(a) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of section 38, the
8 agriculture hub credit determined under this section for
9 any taxable year is an amount equal to 25 percent of the
10 qualified food hub expenses for the taxable year.

11 “(b) QUALIFIED FOOD HUB EXPENSES.—For pur-
12 poses of this section, the term ‘qualified food hub ex-
13 penses’ means amounts paid or incurred by the taxpayer
14 during the taxable year—

15 “(1) for agricultural food products from a food
16 hub developed or expanded under section 2 of the
17 Black Farmers and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers
18 Increased Market Share Act, and

19 “(2) in accordance with a contract certified by
20 the Secretary of Agriculture under section 3(c) of
21 the Black Farmers and Socially Disadvantaged
22 Farmers Increased Market Share Act.

23 “(c) FOOD HUB.—The term ‘food hub’ has the mean-
24 ing given such term in section 2 of the Black Farmers
25 and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers Increased Market
26 Share Act.

1 “(d) TERMINATION.—This section shall not apply to
 2 taxable years beginning after the Secretary determines the
 3 grant program under section 2 of the Black Farmers and
 4 Socially Disadvantaged Farmers Increased Market Share
 5 Act has ended.”.

6 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

7 (1) Section 38(b) of the Internal Revenue Code
 8 of 1986 is amended—

9 (A) in paragraph (32), by striking “plus”
 10 at the end,

11 (B) in paragraph (33), by striking the pe-
 12 riod at the end and inserting “, plus”, and

13 (C) by adding at the end the following new
 14 paragraph:

15 “(34) the agriculture hub credit determined
 16 under section 45U(a).”.

17 (2) The table of sections for subpart D of part
 18 IV of subchapter A of chapter 1 of such Code is
 19 amended by adding at the end the following new
 20 item:

“Sec. 45U. Agriculture hub credit.”.

21 (3) Section 280C of such Code is amended by
 22 adding at the end the following new subsection:

23 “(i) AGRICULTURE HUB CREDIT.—Any deduction or
 24 other credit otherwise allowable with respect to an expense
 25 for which a credit is allowed under section 45U(a) shall

1 be reduced by the amount of the credit under section
2 45U(a) with respect to such expense. If a credit is allowed
3 under section 45U(a) with respect to property of a kind
4 which would properly be included in the inventory of the
5 taxpayer if on hand at the close of the taxable year or
6 property held by the taxpayer primarily for sale to cus-
7 tomers in the ordinary course of the trade or business of
8 such taxpayer, opening inventory or purchases shall be re-
9 duced by the amount of the credit so allowed.”.

10 (c) CERTIFICATION PROCESS.—Not later than 1 year
11 after the date of enactment of this section, the Secretary
12 of Agriculture shall issue regulations to establish a process
13 to certify, at the request of entities seeking an agriculture
14 hub credit section 45U of the Internal Revenue Code of
15 1986, as added by subsection (b), that a contract under
16 which expenditures referred to in such section 45U are
17 made—

18 (1) is not between related parties;

19 (2) is the result of arm’s length negotiations;

20 and

21 (3) meets any other requirements, as deter-
22 mined by the Secretary of Agriculture, in consulta-
23 tion with the Secretary of Treasury.

1 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
2 this section shall apply to expenses paid or incurred in
3 taxable years beginning after December 31, 2025.

4 **SEC. 4. CIVIL RIGHTS ACCOUNTABILITY FOR USDA EM-**
5 **PLOYEES.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall
7 ensure that officials and employees of the Department of
8 Agriculture are held accountable in accordance with sub-
9 section (b) if, while in the course of their employment or
10 in administering a Department of Agriculture program,
11 such officials and employees are found to have engaged
12 in any discriminatory actions, retaliatory actions, harass-
13 ment, civil rights violations, or related misconduct, includ-
14 ing any such actions or misconduct involving any of the
15 following:

16 (1) Failure to provide a receipt for service in
17 accordance with section 2501A(e) of the Food, Agri-
18 culture, Conservation or Trade Act of 1990 (7
19 U.S.C. 2279–1(e)) to any current or prospective ap-
20 plicants of or participants in Department of Agri-
21 culture programs.

22 (2) Providing an inaccurate receipt for service
23 under such section 2501A(e) to any current or pro-
24 spective applicants of or participants in Department
25 of Agriculture programs.

1 (3) Failure to provide appropriate information
2 regarding relevant programs and services at the De-
3 partment of Agriculture, when requested by any cur-
4 rent or prospective applicants of or participants in
5 Department of Agriculture programs.

6 (4) Failure to timely process applications or
7 otherwise delaying program services to any current
8 or prospective applicants of or participants in, De-
9 partment of Agriculture programs.

10 (b) TAKING CORRECTIVE ACTION.—The Secretary
11 shall ensure that appropriate corrective action is taken
12 with respect to any official or employee of the Department
13 of Agriculture who has been found to have engaged in any
14 of the actions, violations, or misconduct referred to in sub-
15 section (a) while in the course of such official's or employ-
16 ee's employment or in administering a Department of Ag-
17 riculture program—

18 (1) in any administrative finding by the Depart-
19 ment of Agriculture, including any final agency deci-
20 sion issued by the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture
21 for Civil Rights and any civil rights compliance re-
22 view or misconduct investigation conducted by the
23 Department of Agriculture;

24 (2) in any administrative or judicial proceeding;

25 (3) in any civil rights settlement;

1 (4) in any audit or investigation conducted by
2 the Office of the Inspector General of the Depart-
3 ment of Agriculture; or

4 (5) in any investigation conducted by the Office
5 of the Special Counsel.

6 (c) CORRECTIVE ACTION DEFINED.—In this section,
7 the term “corrective action” means any action taken to
8 respond to any of the actions, violations, or misconduct
9 referred to in subsection (a) that—

10 (1) would enhance civil rights at the Depart-
11 ment of Agriculture, including any policy or pro-
12 grammatic changes to prevent similar misconduct
13 from occurring in the future; and

14 (2) may include disciplinary actions, includ-
15 ing—

16 (A) removal from Federal service;

17 (B) suspension without pay;

18 (C) any reduction in grade or pay; and

19 (D) letter of reprimand.

20 **SEC. 5. EQUITABLE RELIEF.**

21 (a) EQUITABLE RELIEF FROM INELIGIBILITY FOR
22 LOANS, PAYMENTS, OR OTHER BENEFITS.—Section 1613
23 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002
24 (7 U.S.C. 7996) is amended—

1 (1) by redesignating subsections (f) through (j)
2 as subsections (g) through (k), respectively;

3 (2) by inserting after subsection (e) the fol-
4 lowing:

5 “(f) EQUITABLE RELIEF BY THE ASSISTANT SEC-
6 RETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS.—

7 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary of
8 Agriculture for Civil Rights (or a designee of the
9 Secretary in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for
10 Civil Rights, if no Assistant Secretary of Agriculture
11 for Civil Rights is confirmed in accordance with sec-
12 tion 218(b) of the Department of Agriculture Reor-
13 ganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6918(b))) may
14 grant relief in accordance with subsections (b)
15 through (d) to a participant who files a civil rights
16 program complaint.

17 “(2) DECISIONS.—The decision by the Assist-
18 ant Secretary of Agriculture for Civil Rights (or the
19 designee of the Secretary) to grant relief under this
20 subsection shall not require prior approval by any of-
21 ficer or employee of the Department of Agriculture.

22 “(3) OTHER AUTHORITY.—The authority pro-
23 vided to the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for
24 Civil Rights (or the designee of the Secretary) under
25 this subsection is in addition to any other applicable

1 authority and does not limit other authority provided
2 by law or the Secretary.”;

3 (3) in subsection (g), as so redesignated, by
4 striking “or the State Conservationist” and inserting
5 “the State Conservationist, or the Assistant Sec-
6 retary of Agriculture for Civil Rights (or the des-
7 ignee of the Secretary)”;

8 (4) in paragraph (1) of subsection (h), as so re-
9 designated, by striking “and (e)” and inserting “(e),
10 and (f)”.

11 (b) **EQUITABLE RELIEF FOR ACTIONS TAKEN IN**
12 **GOOD FAITH.**—Section 366 of the Consolidated Farm and
13 Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 2008a) is amended—

14 (1) by amending subsection (b) to read as fol-
15 lows:

16 “(b) **LIMITATION.**—The Secretary may only provide
17 relief to a farmer or rancher under subsection (a) if the
18 Secretary determines that the farmer or rancher—

19 “(1) acting in good faith, relied on an action of,
20 or the advice of, the Secretary (including any au-
21 thorized representative of the Secretary) to the det-
22 riment of the farming or ranching operation of the
23 farmer or rancher; or

24 “(2) failed to comply fully with the require-
25 ments of a program described in subsection (a)(1),

1 but made a good faith effort to comply with the re-
2 quirements.”;

3 (2) by inserting after subsection (d) the fol-
4 lowing:

5 “(e) EQUITABLE RELIEF BY THE ASSISTANT SEC-
6 RETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS.—

7 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary of
8 Agriculture for Civil Rights (or a designee of the
9 Secretary in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for
10 Civil Rights, if no Assistant Secretary of Agriculture
11 for Civil Rights is confirmed in accordance with sec-
12 tion 218(b) of the Department of Agriculture Reor-
13 ganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6918(b))) may
14 grant relief in accordance with subsections (a)
15 through (d) to an individual who files a civil rights
16 program complaint.

17 “(2) DECISIONS.—The decision by the Assist-
18 ant Secretary of Agriculture for Civil Rights (or the
19 designee of the Secretary) to grant relief under this
20 subsection shall not require prior approval by any of-
21 ficer or employee of the Department of Agriculture.

22 “(3) OTHER AUTHORITY.—The authority pro-
23 vided to the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for
24 Civil Rights (or the designee of the Secretary) under
25 this subsection is in addition to any other applicable

1 authority and does not limit other authority provided
 2 by law or the Secretary.”;

3 (3) by redesignating subsection (e) as sub-
 4 section (f); and

5 (4) in subsection (f), as so redesignated, by
 6 striking “Secretary” and inserting “Secretary, or
 7 the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Civil
 8 Rights (or the designee of the Secretary)”.

9 **SEC. 6. BURDEN OF PROOF FOR NATIONAL APPEALS DIVI-**
 10 **SION HEARINGS.**

11 Section 277(c)(4) of the Department of Agriculture
 12 Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6997(c)(4)) is
 13 amended to read as follows:

14 “(4) BURDEN OF PROOF.—The agency shall
 15 bear the burden of proving by substantial evidence
 16 that the adverse decision of the agency was valid.”.

17 **SEC. 7. OFFICE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS OMBUDSPERSON.**

18 Title III of the Federal Crop Insurance Reform and
 19 Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7
 20 U.S.C. 2231b et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
 21 the following:

22 **“SEC. 310. OFFICE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS OMBUDSPERSON.**

23 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after
 24 the date of enactment of this section, the Secretary shall
 25 establish an Office of the Civil Rights Ombudsperson (in

1 this section referred to as the ‘Office’) within the Depart-
2 ment. The Office shall be independent of Department
3 agencies and offices.

4 “(b) OMBUDSPERSON DESIGNATION.—The Secretary
5 shall designate a Civil Rights Ombudsperson (in this sec-
6 tion referred to as the ‘Ombudsperson’) for the Office. The
7 Ombudsperson shall be considered a senior official of the
8 Department and have a background in civil rights enforce-
9 ment.

10 “(c) OFFICE PERSONNEL.—The Ombudsperson shall
11 appoint such employees as are necessary to perform the
12 functions of the Office and for the administration of the
13 Office.

14 “(d) FUNCTIONS.—The functions of the Office shall
15 be—

16 “(1) to assist producers and other customers of
17 Department programs in navigating the civil rights
18 review process;

19 “(2) to ensure that participants (as defined in
20 section 271) are aware of the appeals process under
21 subtitle H of title II, including informal hearings
22 under section 275;

23 “(3) to promote awareness of the Office and its
24 responsibilities among producers and other cus-
25 tomers of Department programs; and

1 “(4) to raise issues and concerns with respect
2 to, and make recommendations to the Secretary
3 about, equitable access or implementation of Depart-
4 ment programs.

5 “(e) ACCESS TO INFORMATION.—

6 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2),
7 the Secretary shall establish procedures to provide
8 the Office access to all departmental records nec-
9 essary to execute the functions of the Office under
10 subsection (d).

11 “(2) TIMELINES.—The procedures described in
12 paragraph (1) shall include a requirement that re-
13 quests from the Office for departmental records
14 shall be fulfilled not later than 60 days after the re-
15 quest is made.

16 “(f) ANNUAL REPORT.—Beginning not later than 1
17 year after the date of the enactment of this section, and
18 annually thereafter, the Ombudsperson shall prepare and
19 submit to the House Committee on Agriculture and the
20 Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
21 a report on—

22 “(1) the activities carried out by the Office; and

23 “(2) the findings and recommendations of the
24 Office with respect to equitable access or implemen-
25 tation of Department programs.

1 “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
2 is authorized to be appropriated such sums as are nec-
3 essary to carry out this section for each of fiscal years
4 2026 through 2028.”.

○