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# U.S. Senators Introduce Urban Ag Support Bill

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Right before they left for the August break, a group of U.S. Senators introduced a bill to support urban and suburban farmers, including CEA producers, with the Supporting Urban and Innovative Farming Act of 2023.

The bill reforms the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) to improve its technical assistance to urban farmers, as well as enables cooperative agreements with community experts. Most importantly, it increases access to grant funds directly to farmers (which would include CEA producers). It also scales up composting and food waste initiatives, according to information released by U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen's office (D-Maryland). The other senators who championed the bill are Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Sen. John Fetterman (D-Pennsylvania), Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pennsylvania), Sen. Ed Markey (D-Massachusetts) and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon).

"Urban farmers create jobs and opportunities in Ohio cities, and help feed our communities—yet too often they haven't had the support they need to compete," said Sen. Brown in the announcement. "This bill will provide new tools and resources to support urban agriculture, from research to technical assistance and direct investment."

The bill would set mandatory funding at $50 million annually, ensuring the program can sustain accelerated growth, which is currently $50 million more than OUAIP has now, as both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees cut the office's funding entirely.

The bill was applauded by the folks at New York-based vertical farming company Bowery.

"CEA is uniquely poised to help expand the year-round domestic production and availability of fresh fruits and vegetables while also helping to build more sustainable and resilient supply chains," said Colin O'Neil, Director of Public Policy and Social Impact for Bowery in a statement. "In order to see its potential fully realized, the federal government must play a greater role in fostering innovation, accelerating research and data collection, and ensuring that CEA producers, urban and rural alike, have the tools needed, just as the Supporting Urban and Innovation Farming Act seeks to do."