

**TESTIMONY OF
AMANDA E. BEAL, COMMISSIONER
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY**

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
And the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

January 24, 2023

LD 206 - An Act To Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government, and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023

Good afternoon Senators Rotundo and Ingwersen, Representatives Sachs and Pluecker, and Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Randy Charette, and I am the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF), here on behalf of Commissioner Beal to testify in support of LD 206, the Governor's Supplemental Budget proposal for State fiscal year 2023. This testimony addresses each item and proceeds sequentially starting on page A-2 through A-4.

You will see that our supplemental budget requests address urgent and ongoing work, as well as critical needs within our programs. Of the 13 initiatives and one language item you will be asked to vote on in this budget, seven are related to position reclassifications approved by the Bureau of Human Resources, and three initiatives are generally housekeeping in nature. Hopefully, these introductory comments provide helpful background information as you consider the following initiatives.

Initiatives for the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry begin on **page A-2** in the **Bureau of Agriculture (0393)**. The first initiative is a one-time appropriation of \$650,000 for the extraordinary costs associated with animal seizures. The lasting impacts of the pandemic on the pace at which court proceedings are resolved has resulted in animals being in the Department's custody for much longer time-frames in the past few years. Additionally, the Department has experienced another recent animal seizure, which is compounding our Animal Welfare Program's budgetary gap. The Department is unable to absorb the costs associated with continuing to care for these animals within existing resources.

Also on **page A-2** is the **Division of Forest Protection (Z232)**. The first four initiatives in this account provide funding for approved position reclassifications. The fifth initiative provides \$85,657 to cover the increase in aviation insurance for ACF aircraft. The Division of Risk Management within DAFS provides high-quality insurance, loss control, and claims services to all state agencies, the state's higher education institutions, and some quasi-state agencies at the lowest possible cost. The rates are applicable to various insurance lines provided by the State's self-insurance program and have been calculated in accordance with Title 5 §1733.

The last initiative on **page A-2** provides \$115,000 to allow the **Division of Forest Protection** to replace current firefighting gear and brush coats with new gear that is PFAS-free. This would replace gear for 75 call-when-needed-firefighters (CWNFF) at \$500 per set, and replace 2 sets at \$500 per set for 67 Forest Rangers, as well as replacing 30 brush coats at \$350 each.

At the top of **page A-3**, there is one initiative for the approved reclassification of 13 positions in the **Forest Resource Management (Z233)** General Fund account.

The final three initiatives on **page A-3** align the allocations in the **Harness Racing Commission (0320)**, **Milk Commission (0188)**, and **Off-Road Recreational Vehicles Program (Z224)** with revenues as recommended in the December 1, 2022 forecast of the Revenue Forecasting Committee.

On **page A-4**, there are two initiatives funding approved position reclassifications in the **Parks – General Operations (Z221)** program.

Part K, on **page 6**, resolves a conflict with Title 7, section 714, subsection 4 and Title 7, section 3906-B. Both sections directed the Commissioner to deposit the same revenue into two different Funds. This language will ensure that revenues in excess of \$157,000 will be deposited to the Companion Animal Sterilization Fund.

This concludes the presentation on our 2023 supplemental budget. We would be glad to respond to any questions you may have.