

# STATE OF NEW YORK

7951--B

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

May 14, 2025

Introduced by Sen. MAYER -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Finance -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee -- recommitted to the Committee on Finance in accordance with Senate Rule 6, sec. 8 -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the state finance law, the highway law and the vehicle and traffic law, in relation to establishing the native/pollinator planting fund, the pollinator highway program and creating distinctive native plant or pollinator license plates

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The state finance law is amended by adding a new section  
2 99-uu to read as follows:

3 § 99-uu. Native/pollinator planting fund. 1. There is hereby estab-  
4 lished in the joint custody of the commissioner of taxation and finance  
5 and the state comptroller a special fund to be known as the  
6 native/pollinator planting fund. It shall consist of amounts credited to  
7 the fund in accordance with this section.

8 2. The fund shall consist of: (a) revenue from appropriations or other  
9 money authorized by the state legislature and specifically designated to  
10 be credited to the fund; (b) interest earned on money in the fund; (c)  
11 state and federal grants for green infrastructure projects; and (d)  
12 revenue generated from the sale of a dedicated distinctive license plate  
13 featuring native plant or pollinator imagery. Amounts credited to the  
14 fund shall not be subject to further appropriation and any money remain-  
15 ing in the fund at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the  
16 general fund.

17 3. Money in the fund shall be expended to support the establishment  
18 and implementation of the program established under section sixty-seven

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 of the highway law, including grants to municipalities and partnerships  
2 with environmental organizations. Priority funding shall be given to  
3 projects demonstrating significant community and environmental benefits.

4 4. The department of transportation shall annually, not later than  
5 December thirty-first, report on the activity of the fund to: (a) the  
6 chairs of the senate and the assembly environmental conservation commit-  
7 tees; (b) the chairs of the senate and the assembly transportation  
8 committees; and (c) the chairs of the senate finance and the assembly  
9 ways and means committees.

10 § 2. The highway law is amended by adding a new section 67 to read as  
11 follows:

12 § 67. Pollinator highway program. 1. The department shall establish a  
13 program to promote the cultivation and maintenance of native flowering  
14 plants, grasses and shrubs on land bordering state highways and on other  
15 public lands. The department shall establish objectives for the program  
16 including: (a) incorporating native plantings into green infrastructure  
17 solutions, such as rain gardens, bio-swales and permeable landscapes to  
18 reduce runoff, filter pollutants and improve water quality; (b) estab-  
19 lishing and enhancing habitats for pollinators, including bees, butterf-  
20 lies and other beneficial insects by prioritizing plant species native  
21 to the region; and (c) utilizing native vegetation to improve soil  
22 health, sequester carbon and reduce the need for emissions-intensive  
23 maintenance activities such as mowing and pesticide applications.

24 2. The department, in consultation with the department of agriculture  
25 and markets, the department of environmental conservation and relevant  
26 environmental organizations, shall: (a) identify and prioritize suitable  
27 locations and areas that would benefit from improved stormwater manage-  
28 ment, reduced maintenance or enhanced biodiversity; (b) develop stand-  
29 ards for selecting and maintaining plant species to ensure their ecolog-  
30 ical suitability, resilience and effectiveness in achieving the  
31 program's goals; (c) encourage the use of innovative stormwater manage-  
32 ment techniques that integrate native vegetation; and (d) coordinate  
33 with municipalities, regional planning agencies and environmental groups  
34 to implement pilot projects and community-based initiatives.

35 3. The department shall support the program's implementation by estab-  
36 lishing: (a) grants to municipalities for designing and installing green  
37 infrastructure projects utilizing native plantings; (b) partnerships  
38 with local nurseries and landscapers to supply native plants and support  
39 job creation; (c) public-private partnerships to reduce costs and  
40 enhance the program's outreach; and (d) in consultation with the depart-  
41 ment of motor vehicles, a distinctive license plate featuring native  
42 plant or pollinator imagery, with the proceeds supporting the program's  
43 activities and grants to municipalities.

44 4. The department shall promote community engagement and education by:  
45 (a) developing and disseminating educational materials about the envi-  
46 ronmental, economic and health benefits of native plantings and stormwa-  
47 ter management; (b) encouraging citizen involvement through volunteer  
48 programs, local workshops and monitoring initiatives; and (c) collab-  
49 orating with school and community organizations to promote environmental  
50 stewardship and awareness.

51 5. The department shall establish measurable goals and metrics to  
52 assess the program's effectiveness, including: (a) the reduction in  
53 stormwater runoff and improvement in water quality; (b) increases in  
54 pollinator populations and biodiversity; (c) cost savings in maintenance  
55 and operations; and (d) annual reporting to the general public and the  
56 legislature on the program's progress.

1 6. The department shall promulgate rules and regulations to carry out  
2 the purposes of this section within one year of its effective date.

3 § 3. The vehicle and traffic law is amended by adding a new section  
4 404-ff to read as follows:

5 § 404-ff. Distinctive native plant or pollinator license plates. 1.  
6 Any person residing in this state shall, upon request, be issued a  
7 distinctive native plant or pollinator license plate of a design  
8 approved by the commissioner, after consultation with the commissioner  
9 of environmental conservation and the commissioner of transportation.  
10 Application for such license plate shall be filed with the commissioner  
11 in such form and detail as the commissioner shall prescribe.

12 2. A distinctive native plant or pollinator plate issued pursuant to  
13 this section shall be issued in the same manner as other number plates  
14 upon the payment of the regular registration fees prescribed by section  
15 four hundred one of this article; provided, however, that an additional  
16 annual service charge of twenty-five dollars shall be charged for such  
17 plate. All monies received as annual service charges under this section  
18 shall be deposited to the credit of the native/pollinator planting fund  
19 established pursuant to section ninety-nine-uu of the state finance law;  
20 and shall be used to support the establishment and implementation of the  
21 pollinator highway program established under section sixty-seven of the  
22 highway law.

23 § 4. 1. A distinctive plate established pursuant to section 404-ff of  
24 the vehicle and traffic law as added by section three of this act shall  
25 only be designed, produced and issued upon the delivery to the depart-  
26 ment of motor vehicles of a surety bond in the amount of \$6,000, which  
27 shall be executed by a surety company authorized by the department of  
28 financial services to transact business in this state. Provided, howev-  
29 er, that if the commissioner of motor vehicles shall have received prior  
30 to plate design, production and issuance at least two hundred orders for  
31 such distinctive plate together with the additional annual service  
32 charge applicable to each such order, which shall be non-refundable, no  
33 such surety bond shall be required. Any additional service charges  
34 collected pursuant to this section shall be deposited pursuant to the  
35 provisions of section ninety-nine-uu of the state finance law.

36 2. If, upon the expiration of two years following the date upon which  
37 distinctive plates in the series are first available for sale 200 or  
38 more sets of such plates are sold, a bond delivered pursuant to this  
39 section shall be discontinued. If fewer than 200 sets of such plates are  
40 sold by such time, the department of motor vehicles shall be entitled to  
41 recover against the bond in an amount proportionate to such shortfall.

42 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately.