To amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to establish an Office of Small Farms, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Booker introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to establish an Office of Small Farms, and for other purposes.

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Office of Small Farms Establishment Act of 2023”.

SEC. 2. OFFICE OF SMALL FARMS.

(a) In General.—Subtitle B of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6931 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:
“SEC. 229. OFFICE OF SMALL FARMS.

“(a) Definition of Small Farm, Ranch, or Forest Operation.—In this section, the term ‘small farm, ranch, or forest operation’ means a farm, ranch, or forest operation that—

“(1)(A) is less than 180 acres; or

“(B) meets another acreage-based definition of ‘small’, as determined by the Secretary, that takes into consideration—

“(i) the State or region in which the farm, ranch, or forest operation is located;

“(ii) the production system of the farm, ranch, or forest operation; or

“(iii) both; and

“(2) has an annual gross cash farm income of less than $350,000.

“(b) Establishment.—

“(1) In general.—The Secretary shall establish within the farm production and conservation mission area the Office of Small Farms.

“(2) Director.—The Secretary shall appoint a Director of the Office of Small Farms (referred to in this section as the ‘Director’). A senior official within the farm production and conservation mission area may be appointed to serve as the Director.

“(c) Duties.—The Director shall—
“(1) coordinate efforts to improve support for small farms, ranches, and forest operations across all Department agencies and offices;

“(2) review Department programs and policies and identify statutory, regulatory, and administrative provisions, policies, and guidance that disadvantage small farm, ranch, or forest operation participation, and recommend changes to ensure that those programs and policies adequately serve small farms, ranches, and forest operations;

“(3) develop recommendations for new initiatives, including financing mechanisms and technical assistance opportunities, to specifically serve small farms, ranches, and forest operations relating to production, conservation, business planning, land access, and other issues, as determined by the Secretary;

“(4) make recommendations to Department agencies and offices and other Federal agencies on tracking small farm, ranch, or forest operation data, including demographics and program participation rates;

“(5) propose research agendas on topics that are of special interest to small farms, ranches, and forest operations;
“(6) provide or coordinate technical assistance through the Department or through cooperative agreements with other entities to operators of small farms, ranches, and forest operations to enable those operators to access the full complement of Department grant, cost-share, and loan programs;

“(7) implement program directly or through cooperative agreements with other entities to provide grants of not more than $25,000 to operators of small farms, ranches, and forest operations for—

“(A) equipment and infrastructure repairs and upgrades;

“(B) uninsured losses;

“(C) business planning and market development assistance;

“(D) conservation practice adoption;

“(E) down payments for land acquisition;

and

“(F) such other purposes as the Secretary determines to be appropriate;

“(8) operate a hotline through which operators of small farms, ranches, and forest operations can anonymously report problems that the operators encounter in attempts to access Department programs; and
“(9) advise other Federal agencies on how to effectively reach and serve small farms, ranches, and forest operations.

“(d) LIAISONS.—The following officials shall appoint, from among the officers and employees under the respective official, a liaison to the Office of Small Farms:

“(1) The Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

“(2) The Administrator of the Farm Service Agency.

“(3) The Administrator of the Risk Management Agency.

“(4) The Under Secretary of Agriculture for Rural Development.

“(5) The Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

“(6) The Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service.

“(7) The Administrator of the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

“(8) The Director of the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement.

“(9) The heads of such other agencies, offices, and advisory groups as the Secretary determines to be appropriate, including—
“(A) the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production; and

“(B) the Office of Tribal Relations.

“(e) Authorization of Appropriations.—There are authorized to be appropriated—

“(1) $15,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2028 for the administration of the Office of Small Farms; and

“(2) $10,000,000 for each fiscal year to provide technical assistance and grants authorized by this section.”.

(b) Technical Amendment.—The Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 is amended by redesignating the first section 225 (7 U.S.C. 6925) (relating to the Food Access Liaison) as section 224A.

(e) Conforming Amendment.—Section 296(b) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 7014(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(11) The authority of the Secretary to carry out section 229.”.