

Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act

Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ), Senator Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), and Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)

New legislation aimed at delivering \$5 billion in direct relief to Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic farmers and other agricultural producers of color to help them respond to the devastating consequences of the pandemic and resulting economic downturn, as well as address longstanding inequity in agriculture.

Historically, Black, indigenous, Hispanic, and farmers of color have struggled to keep their farms and ownership of land in rural communities due to discrimination by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other government agencies. Black farmers in America alone have lost more than [12 million acres](#) of farmland over the last century, mostly since the 1950s: according to data from [USDA](#), while at its peak in 1920 there were approximately 925,000 Black farmers in the United States, accounting for roughly one-sixth of U.S. farmers, by the year 2017 USDA's Census of Agriculture [reported](#) there were only about 35,000 farms with Black producers — just 1.7% of the total number in the U.S. Additionally, hundreds of millions of acres of farmland have been lost across all communities of color due to [discriminatory practices](#) at the federal level, and many farmers of color who remain in agriculture struggle with [burdensome debt](#).

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The *Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act* would provide \$5 billion to America's Black, indigenous, Hispanic, and farmers of color who, in addition to being hard-hit by the current public health and economic emergencies, have long struggled to keep their farms and ownership of their land in rural communities due to discrimination by USDA and other government agencies.

- The legislation provides \$4 billion in direct relief payments to help farmers of color pay-off outstanding USDA farm loan debts and related taxes, and help them respond to the economic impacts of the pandemic.
- The legislation provides another \$1 billion fund to support activities at USDA that will root out systemic racism, provide technical and legal assistance to agricultural communities of color, and fund under-resourced programs that will shape the future for farmers and communities of color. Specifically, this \$1 billion fund will include:
 - Grants and loans to improve land access & address heirs' property issues;
 - Support for one or more legal centers focused on agricultural legal issues of farmers of color;
 - Pilot projects that focus on land acquisition, financial planning, technical assistance, and credit;
 - A racial equity commission and related activities to address systemic racism across USDA;
 - Support for research, education, and extension at HBCUs and other institutions of higher education that historically serve communities of color;
 - Scholarships at 1890's land grant universities and for indigenous students attending land grant institutions;
 - Outreach, mediation, financial training, capacity building training, cooperative development training and support, and other technical assistance; and
 - Assistance to farmers, ranchers, or forest landowners of color that are former farm loan borrowers and suffered related adverse actions, or past discrimination or bias.

The *Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act* is supported by Rural Coalition, National Black Farmers Association (NBFA), Black Belt Justice Center, Black Farmers' Appeal: Cancel Pigford Debt Campaign