



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

SB3972

Introduced 2/6/2026, by Sen. Seth Lewis

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

20 ILCS 605/605-1119 new

Amends the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois. Provides that the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity shall, subject to appropriation, establish the Hydroponic Initiative Grant Program to help increase access to and the availability of healthy food in areas designated as food deserts in the State and assist areas with significant levels of vacant developed commercial space, as determined by the Department, by providing grants to persons for the establishment of hydroponic agriculture facilities within vacant developed commercial space. Authorizes the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to grant awards for market or site feasibility studies, for purchases of ownership of vacant developed commercial space, for capital improvements, planning, renovations, durable and non-durable equipment purchases, or other costs as determined by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Allows for rulemaking by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Defines terms. Effective immediately.

LRB104 19006 HLH 32451 b

1 AN ACT concerning State government.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Department of Commerce and Economic
5 Opportunity Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois
6 is amended by adding Section 605-1119 as follows:

7 (20 ILCS 605/605-1119 new)

8 Sec. 605-1119. Hydroponic Initiative Grant Program.

9 (a) As used in this Section:

10 "Food desert" means a census tract that:

11 (A) meets one of the following poverty standards:

12 (i) the census tract has a poverty rate of at least
13 20%;

14 (ii) the census tract is not located within a
15 metropolitan statistical area and has a median family
16 income that is less than or equal to 80% of the
17 statewide median household income; or

18 (iii) the census tract is located within a
19 metropolitan statistical area and has a median family
20 income that is less than or equal to 80% of the greater
21 of (i) the statewide median household income or (ii)
22 the metropolitan area median family income; and

23 (B) meets one of the following population density and

1 food accessibility standards:

2 (1) the census tract is a rural tract, and at least
3 33% of the population of the tract or at least 500
4 residents in the tract reside more than 10 miles from
5 the nearest grocery store; or

6 (2) the census tract is an urban tract, and at
7 least 33% of the population of the tract, or at least
8 500 residents in the tract, reside more than one-half
9 mile from the nearest grocery store.

10 (C) The Department may also designate an area that
11 does not meet the standards set forth in this definition
12 as a food desert if the designation is made in accordance
13 with criteria established by the Department by rule using
14 data that includes, but is not limited to, poverty metrics
15 and access to existing grocery stores.

16 "Person" means an individual, partnership, corporation, or
17 not-for-profit organization.

18 "Rural tract" means a census tract that is not an urban
19 tract.

20 "Urban tract" means a census tract having its geographic
21 centroid in an urban area, as defined by the Bureau of the
22 Census for the most recent year in which all relevant data to
23 identify food deserts is available.

24 "Vacant developed commercial space" means a constructed
25 commercial building or space within a commercial building that
26 has been vacant for at least 6 months immediately preceding

1 the date of the grant application.

2 (b) The Department shall, subject to appropriation,
3 establish the Hydroponic Initiative Grant Program to help
4 increase access to and the availability of healthy food in
5 areas designated as food deserts in the State and assist areas
6 with significant levels of vacant developed commercial space,
7 as determined by the Department. The Department shall provide
8 grants to persons for the establishment of hydroponic
9 agriculture facilities within vacant developed commercial
10 space. The Department may, by rule, establish parameters for
11 the program to determine grant eligibility, including, but not
12 limited to, facility square footage requirements, location
13 requirements, and the type of plants proposed to be produced.
14 The Department may prioritize grant awards based upon poverty
15 rates, geographic diversity, local ownership, access to
16 grocery stores in the area surrounding the proposed facility
17 location, amount of currently vacant developed commercial
18 space near a proposed facility, and other factors as
19 determined by the Department. The Department may award grants
20 for any one or more of the following:

21 (1) market or site feasibility studies;

22 (2) purchase of ownership of vacant developed
23 commercial space;

24 (3) capital improvements, planning, renovations,
25 durable and non-durable equipment purchases; and

26 (4) other costs as determined by the Department.

1 (c) Grant awards under the Hydroponic Initiative Grant
2 Program shall not exceed \$1,000,000 per applicant or 25% of
3 the total project cost, whichever is less.

4 (d) The Department shall adopt rules to implement and
5 administer this Section.

6 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
7 becoming law.