

1 A RESOLUTION declaring September 18 as Farmer Suicide Prevention Day in the
2 Commonwealth.

3 WHEREAS, National Farm Safety and Health Week, September 15 to 21, annually
4 promotes the safety and health of the millions of farmers and farm workers who play a
5 part in producing the food, fiber, feed, and fuel for this nation and the world as a whole;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, during Farm Safety and Health Week, it is appropriate to set aside
8 Wednesday, September 18, as a day to bring attention to a concern in the farming
9 community and beyond, that of rising farmer suicide rates; and

10 WHEREAS, most members of this Honorable Body well know the economic,
11 physical, and emotional challenges inherent in farming; and

12 WHEREAS, farmers deal with multiple stresses and uncertainties, such as financial
13 concerns revolving around equipment costs, borrowing, mortgages, rent, and insurance;
14 economic uncertainties; crop and livestock losses; the whims of the weather; risks of
15 chemical exposures or work-related injuries; changing federal regulations; and personal
16 and family concerns; and

17 WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture forecasted that in 2018,
18 net farm income, a broad measure of profits, would decrease by \$9.1 billion from 2017 to
19 an estimated \$66.3 billion, after increasing \$13.8 billion in 2017; and

20 WHEREAS, net farm income has been on a downward trend since 2013 with the
21 exception of 2017; and

22 WHEREAS, the University of Kentucky's Department of Agricultural Economics
23 predicted that Kentucky agricultural cash receipts would be relatively stable in 2018 at
24 \$5.7 billion, matching the 2017 level, but well below the record \$6.4 billion in 2014; and

25 WHEREAS, some farm sectors in the state are faring well, poultry and horses as
26 examples, while others are struggling, particularly dairy; and

27 WHEREAS, the number of Grade A permitted dairy farms in the state decreased

1 from 600 at the beginning of 2018 to 513 by year's end, an apparent outgrowth of
2 declining milk prices; and

3 WHEREAS, mental health experts have observed that mental health and behavioral
4 health are major concerns in farming communities, in light of the state of the farm
5 industry in recent years; and

6 WHEREAS, because of the self-reliant and independent nature of farmers, they
7 oftentimes may be reluctant to seek help for anxiety or depression brought on by the
8 everyday pressures of farming; and

9 WHEREAS, Kentucky's suicide rate ranks 20th in the nation, according to data
10 compiled by the American Association of Suicidology; and

11 WHEREAS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data show the suicide rate
12 for male farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural managers is double that of the general
13 population; and

14 WHEREAS, the anxieties affecting farmers are prevalent nationwide, prompting the
15 United States Congress to allocate \$10 million in annual funding through the Farm Bill
16 for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, ultimately making funding available
17 nationwide to provide stress counseling and referrals for assistance as necessary to those
18 engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related programs; and

19 WHEREAS, farmer crisis helplines to provide assistance for distressed farmers and
20 their families operate in several states; and

21 WHEREAS, it would be appropriate in Kentucky to establish a "one-stop shop" for
22 farmers to contact for assistance and consultation in sorting out financial, legal, and other
23 problems they may be facing, with behavioral and mental help available as well;

24 NOW, THEREFORE,

25 ***Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the***
26 ***Commonwealth of Kentucky:***

27 ➔Section 1. The House of Representatives recognizes September 18 as Farmer

1 Suicide Prevention Day in Kentucky.

2 ➔Section 2. The House of Representatives urges the appropriate state agencies,
3 and state colleges and universities to work with agricultural-related entities,
4 agribusinesses, corporations, and nonprofits to examine the feasibility of establishing an
5 office to serve as a central point of contact for farmers facing financial difficulties, legal
6 issues, and other problems.

7 ➔Section 3. The Clerk of the House of Representatives is directed to transmit a
8 copy of this Resolution to Representative Brandon Reed for distribution.