THE SIDNEY EARNEST MANNING AGRICULTURAL AND VOCATIONAL ENRICHMENT FOR VETERANS' EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND SUPPORT ACT

(The SAVE VETS Act)

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act shall be known and may be cited as the **Sidney Earnest Manning Agricultural and Vocational Enrichment for Veterans' Education, Training, and Support Act**, or the **SAVE VETS Act**.

SECTION 2. LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

The General Assembly finds that:

1. **Corporal Sidney Earnest Manning**, Medal of Honor recipient, Purple Heart recipient, and World War I Hero, demonstrated extraordinary courage and lifelong service to the United States, and his legacy merits recognition through programs that support those who have borne the greatest burdens of military service.
2. Medal of Honor Recipients and Gold Star Families represent the highest levels of sacrifice to the nation, and many seek opportunities in agriculture as a pathway to healing, economic independence, and community leadership.
3. Beginning farmers face significant barriers, including access to land, capital, training, and technical assistance, particularly in rural communities.
4. Indiana's agricultural economy benefits from programs that expand the agricultural workforce, strengthen rural communities, and promote soil health, conservation, and regenerative practices.
5. Coordinated support through the **Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA)** and the **Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC)** will provide Medal of Honor Recipients and Gold Star Families with the tools necessary to establish and sustain successful farm operations in Indiana.

Purpose. The purpose of this Act is to create a comprehensive agricultural education, vocational training, and financial-support program for Medal of Honor Recipients and Gold Star Families who wish to begin farming in Indiana.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act:

- **"Medal of Honor Recipient"** means an individual awarded the Medal of Honor by the United States.
- **"Gold Star Family"** means the immediate family of a servicemember who died in the line of duty.
- **"Agricultural training program"** means any ISDA-approved classroom, vocational, or experiential program in agriculture, agribusiness, agronomy, soil science, animal science, livestock management, conservation, or related fields.
- **"Beginning farmer"** means an individual entering agriculture with very limited to no prior farm ownership or operation experience.
- **"Eligible participant"** means a Medal of Honor Recipient or member of a Gold Star Family who are Indiana residents and who applies for support under this Act.

SECTION 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SAVE VETS AGRICULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAM.

(a) **Program Creation.** The **Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA)** shall establish and administer the SAVE VETS Agricultural Training Program.

(b) **Program Components.** The Program must include:

1. **Classroom Instruction.**
    - Courses in agronomy, soil health, livestock management, regenerative agriculture, farm business planning, and agricultural economics.
2. **Experiential Training.**
    - On-farm apprenticeships, mentorships with established Indiana farmers, and supervised agricultural experience programs.
3. **Technical Assistance.**
    - Support in land acquisition, conservation planning, equipment selection, and regulatory compliance.
4. **Business Development.**
    - Training in marketing, financial management, risk management, and value-added production.

SECTION 5. FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO CAPITAL.

(a) **Grant Funding.** ISDA may award grants to eligible participants for:

- Tuition and fees for agricultural training programs
- Tools, equipment, and supplies
- Initial farm operating costs
- Conservation practices and soil-health improvements

(b) **No-Interest Loan Program.** The **Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC)** shall establish a revolving no-interest loan fund to assist eligible participants with:

- Land acquisition
- Infrastructure development
- Livestock purchases
- Equipment procurement

(c) **Loan Terms.** Loans must include:

- Zero percent interest
- Flexible repayment schedules
- Forgiveness options for participants who maintain agricultural operations in Indiana for a minimum number of years, as determined by IEDC rule

SECTION 6. TAX INCENTIVES.

(a) **Beginning Farmer Tax Credit.** Eligible participants who establish a farm operation in Indiana are entitled to a state income-tax credit for:

- Qualified agricultural investments
- Conservation improvements
- Value-added production activities

(b) **Landowner Incentives.** Landowners who lease or sell farmland to eligible participants may receive:

- A tax credit for long-term leases
- A tax credit for sales below market value
- Additional incentives for leases incorporating conservation practices approved by ISDA

SECTION 7. SIDNEY EARNEST MANNING HONOR SCHOLARSHIP.

(a) **Scholarship Creation.** ISDA shall establish the **Sidney Earnest Manning Honor Scholarship** to support Medal of Honor Recipients and Gold Star Family members pursuing agricultural education.

(b) **Eligible Uses.** Scholarship funds may be applied to:

- Tuition
- Certification programs
- Apprenticeships
- Agricultural leadership training

SECTION 8. ADMINISTRATION AND REPORTING.

(a) **Administering Agencies.** ISDA shall administer training and grants. IEDC shall administer financial-assistance and loan programs.

(b) **Annual Report.** ISDA and IEDC shall jointly submit an annual report to the General Assembly detailing:

- Number of participants served
- Training outcomes
- Loan and grant distributions
- Farm operations established
- Economic and community impacts

SECTION 9. RULEMAKING AUTHORITY.

ISDA and IEDC may adopt rules necessary to implement this Act, including eligibility criteria, application procedures, and performance metrics.

SECTION 10. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act takes effect upon passage.