**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND CHAPTER 3, TITLE 46 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TO ADD SECTION 46‑3‑280 TO PROVIDE FOR THE VETERANS AND WARRIORS TO AGRICULTURE PROGRAM AND FUND.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 3, Title 46 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 46‑3‑280. (A)(1) There is created a program within the South Carolina Department of Agriculture to integrate veterans into the field of agriculture and support veterans currently working in agriculture. The Department of Agriculture, the Division of Veterans’ Affairs, the Adjutant General, Clemson University, South Carolina State University, and any other institution of higher learning that offers agricultural programs shall work in conjunction to recruit and train eligible veterans, and develop and support the program.

(2) Clemson University, in conjunction with the entities listed in subsection (A)(1), may develop a program that may include, but is not limited to, using repurposed land for agricultural development, promoting high tunnel crops and production, expanding the apiary industry, developing cottage industries, exploring niche crops, raising more livestock, increasing the aquaculture industry and helping veterans promote their agricultural products through farmers markets and cooperatives.

(B) There is established in the state treasury a separate and distinct fund known as the ‘South Carolina Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Program and Fund’. The fund shall consist of surplus funds from the Veterans’ Trust Fund, established in Section 25‑21‑10, gifts, grants and donations, and legislative appropriations which may be made to support the program. Expenditures from the fund shall be used exclusively to pay costs, fees and expenses necessary to administer the program.

(C) The Department of Agriculture shall promulgate regulations to implement the provisions of this section.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

‑‑‑‑XX‑‑‑‑