Northfordy Farm

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Testimony for Human Services Committee Public Hearing
HB 6277, An Act Increasing Funding for Elderly Nutrition Programs

Thank you for hearing my testimony today in favor of HB 6277, An Act Increasing Funding for Elderly Nutrition Programs. I have been farming in Northford for many years and I have been participating in farmers' markets around the state for much of that time. But it wasn't until I became involved with CitySeed's network of farmers' markets in New Haven in 2004 that I understood the great need for healthy, nutritious food that is filled by food assistance programs like the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

When I started with City Farmers' Markets in New Haven, the only market was in Wooster Square where it was clear that market goers were eager to take advantage of fresh, healthy produce provided by local farms such as mine. Like many others around the state, the Wooster Square market is WIC certified by the CT Deparment of Agriculture and I was struck by the number of people who, even in this small residential neighborhood, were taking advantage of the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program vouchers.

This fact was driven home for me when, in 2005, CitySeed brought Northfordy into a newly established market in Fair Haven, a largely low-income neighborhood in New Haven.

- In 2005, **City Farmers' Markets redeemed almost $15,000 in FMNP** at Fair Haven alone, serving over 1,000 individuals.
- This accounted for **45% of the revenue for that market.**

The impact of this program on our farm business through the Fair Haven market only increased in 2006.

- In 2006, **FMNP accounted for 20% of Northfordy Farm's revenue in Fair Haven**
- In 2006, the Fair Haven market redeemed $19,000 in FMNP and served 1,250 people.

Suffice it say, Northfordy would not be able to continue operating at the Fair Haven market without the number of FMNP dollars it garners. Increasing funding for this program would not only provide more fresh, Connecticut grown produce for seniors who are nutritionally in need, it will also provide additional revenue for Connecticut farms such as Northfordy, making them viable for years to come.

It's easy to see, then, how the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program becomes a two way street. With more low-income families and individuals, particularly seniors who are on a fixed income, coming and buying fresh produce from my farm at a Connecticut farmers' market, I can grow my operation. With the increase in revenue, I can plant more crops and bring more produce to sell at the market. And so the cycle goes. I personally take pleasure in knowing that the crops that I raise on my land go to feed people who truly need it and who truly appreciate it.

Last year, with the help of revenue from the Fair Haven and Wooster Square markets, I was able to install a permanent greenhouse, which greatly extended my growing season and allowed me to have more vegetables further into the fall. It is important that I could do this, especially for FMNP recipients, because their coupons expire each year at the end of October when the growing season is coming to an end. This winter and spring I am working to clear a small additional parcel on my land where I can increase my production by 25%.

Without the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, it is likely that farmers' markets, particularly those operating in low-income areas where market-goers are most in need, would not remain viable. **An increase in the funding for this program can only have a beneficial outcome: seniors all over the state will receive more nutritious food from local farms, and farms like Northfordy will benefit from the increased revenue making their business viable and preserving their land.**

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony and I would appreciate your support on this important bill.