



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, Inc.

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SB 1061 AAC VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE CENTER FUNDING

February 13, 2007

Chairman Gaffey, Chairman Fleischman and members of the Education Committee, CT Farm Bureau would like to be on record as strongly supporting SB 1061 AAC Concerning Vocational Agriculture Center Funding which will increase the reimbursement amount to towns from \$700 to \$2500.

Vo-Ag is the original School Choice program, the classic magnet school model, which has been in existence since 1920, with regional programs beginning in the 1950's. It has been a model School to Career program with its Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) component focusing on work experience and on the job training. Key to its success is the community involvement and support with our active business and industry-based regional agricultural advisory committees.

Rigorous, up-to-date curriculum proven by 70 to 80% of the graduates continuing on to college, with the majority majoring in agricultural related programs in universities across the country. College credits may be awarded for completion of our high school program, with several universities including UCONN awarding up to 6 college credits for graduates for the in-depth material learned in these high school agri-science programs before the student even enters college. Vocational Agriculture demonstrates proven success in graduates entering agricultural careers based on our 8 years of trend data from our legislatively mandated Five Year Graduate Follow-up Survey results.

The operating schools are struggling to pay for programs, since the state mandates a maximum tuition amount we can charge sending towns at \$7,069.00 per student, while average high school costs are over \$10,000.00 per student. It has been 13 years since the state operating grant amount has been addressed and its long over due. Magnet schools receive \$6500 per student and Charter Schools receive \$8000 per student. We feel \$2500 for Vocational Agriculture will bridge the gap for our funding formulas.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you on this important educational program. Please feel free to contact Bonnie Burr at 860-298-4406 or bonnieb@cfba.org with any questions.