



To: Joint Committee on Human Services

From: Jennifer McTiernan H., Executive Director, CitySeed

Re: SB 1381- AN ACT CONCERNING APPROPRIATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND AGRICULTURE.

Date: March 13, 2007

I am submitting this written testimony to wholeheartedly support SB 1381, An Act Concerning Appropriations to the Departments of Social Services and Agriculture.

CitySeed is a non-profit organization that operates a network of farmers' markets in the City of New Haven. During market season 2005, over \$40,779 in Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons for WIC clients and eligible seniors were redeemed at these markets. During the 2006 season, the redemption for this program reached over \$50,000 and served over 3,340 people. CitySeed can easily relate first-hand how successful and wonderful the WIC Program is. The program is also innovative and highly effective. **Essentially, it takes one dollar and turns it into two dollars: one dollar's worth of income for CT farmers and one dollar's worth of fresh, local and healthy produce for a nutritionally at-risk woman, child or senior.** In addition, this coupon program is the backbone of farmers' markets across the state and therefore plays a critical role in promoting community development and neighborhood revitalization, two additional benefits of farmers' markets.

This bill is an opportunity to expand this wonderful and effective program to the benefit of the state's seniors, farmers and communities with farmers' markets. **It is a win all around.** The need for the bill is clear, too:

As you may know, in 2006, even with a slight increase in funding, there were only 18,514 low-income seniors in CT who were able to receive the \$15 worth of coupons. This number is still not nearly half of the approximately 50,000 low-income seniors who COULD be eligible for this program if the funding were to be increased.

In New Haven, the situation is especially dire because only a very small percentage of eligible seniors are able to get these coupons because of the state's allocation of them. Many, many, many more seniors in the city request the coupons, but because of funding restrictions, are unable to get them. This bill would address this problem swiftly. **I therefore URGE you to PASS it without hesitation. The state's low-income seniors and farmers and farmers' markets will benefit greatly from the vision and commitment of this important bill.**

Please take advantage of this unique opportunity to build on a highly successful and effective program, meet an important need and extend the WIC Program for Fresh Produce for Seniors. Thank you for your time and consideration!