

SOUTHBURY LAND TRUST, INC.

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March 16, 2009

To: Members of the Committee on Environment

Re: In Support of Raised Bill No. 1082: An Act Concerning the Preservation of State-Owned Agricultural Land

For the past 10 years the Southbury Land Trust, working with our town's boards and commissions, has concentrated on preserving what little is left of our agricultural land. We've done this because farms promote the economy, provide jobs, protect valuable wildlife habitat and preserve our traditional rural landscape.

The approximately 625A of farmland owned by the state at the Southbury Training School is the largest remaining unprotected farmland in our town.

The study of state-owned farmland mandated in Bill 1082 could lead to the preservation of this land, which would help fulfill the goals of our Town Plan of Conservation and Development, which gives high priority to farmland preservation. From a state-wide perspective it would also be in keeping with the Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut which states:

“It is the goal of this plan to maintain and support the viability of the agricultural sector to increase a long-term, in-state food producing capacity: 1) through conservation and preservation of prime agricultural lands, and 2) through the creation of incentives that will continue to support agricultural business.”

In recent years the State has spent millions of dollars to purchase the development rights on Connecticut farms, but to date only about 32,000A - less than 25% of its goal of 130,000A - have been preserved.

This bill provides a much needed first step toward preserving irreplaceable farmland that the state already owns.

In a time of serious budget constraints this offers a way to permanently protect a significant amount of farmland at little or no cost!