

Testimony on Proposed S. B. No. 882

An Act Concerning a Manufacturer's BUY CONNECTICUT Program

Commerce Committee

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Submitted by: Aili Arisco; UCONN MSW Student/Business Owner

Members of the Committee on Commerce,

My name is Aili Arisco. I am an MSW student at UCONN School of Social Work. I am here testifying in support of raised Bill 882, AN ACT CONCERNING A MANUFACTURER'S "BUY CONNECTICUT" PROGRAM, and the proposed use of section 22-38 of the general statute "CONNECTICUT GROWN" initiative as a model for a "BUY CONNECTICUT" program. I am advocating for Bill 882 not only as a student but also as an owner of Michael's Greenhouses Farm in Cheshire, Ct. As long time members of Connecticut's Farming community our family greenhouse business has greatly benefited from the "CONNECTICUT GROWN" marketing initiative legislated in 1986 and administered by the Department of Agriculture.

Over the years, The "CONNECTICUT GROWN" program has succeeded in promoting, supporting and growing agriculture state -wide by creating public awareness, unifying farm industries under one common label and fostering collaboration between industry and state.

Aside from direct gains to the farm industry, the overall benefit to the State of Connecticut has been to:

- o **Increase tax revenues for Connecticut by promoting industry growth.**
- o **Increased employment within our industry**
- o **Provided a public relations benefit for the State of Connecticut by showing support for our industry.**
- o **Helped consumers to make informed choices on where the products they purchase originate from.**
- o **Connect producers to retail and state entities to buy Connecticut products.**
- o **Enhance State tourism.**

Consider some known and relatively unknown products manufactured in Connecticut that would benefit from a similar state -wide collaborative public relations campaign under a "BUY CONNECTICUT" program: Fascia's Chocolate (since 1964), the original Wiffleball (since 1950), Pez candy (since 1973), Connecticut Wine Industry, Woodbury Pewter, Liberty Candle Company, Nodine's Smokehouse, Marlin Firearms (since 1870), Waterbury Button Co. (since 1812), to name a few.

I strongly believe that a "BUY CONNECTICUT" state program initiative applied to State manufactured goods would result in *the same economic benefits* the State has gained from the Department of Agriculture's "CONNECTICUT GROWN" initiative. Currently, these industries are only minimally publicized through a nonprofit Connecticut Guild and the for -profit "Connecticut Store" located in downtown Waterbury. **These companies are part of our history and our States future growth.** Collectively, they help fuel local economy, increase state employment, increase state tax revenue and most importantly, demonstrate and showcase the ingenuity and talents of the people of Connecticut. In these difficult and uncertain economic times adopting a "BUY CONNECTICUT" program is a *cost effective* means to support Connecticut industry and promote goodwill to help ensure these companies remain within our State.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak today but most importantly I thank you for your time, your dedication and your commitment in serving as legislatures for the great State of Connecticut. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee has.