

PLANTERS' CHOICE NURSERY LLC

February 19, 2009

Testimony on proposed bill No. 5002 – An act concerning the state acquisition of agricultural development rights program.

The State of Connecticut has purchased the development rights on thousands of acres of land. Much of this land remains unused or under used because there are not enough farmers to work the land. The green industry would very much like to be able to utilize farmland that the state has purchased the development rights on. The green industry, which nurseries are a part of, is the largest segment of agriculture in Connecticut and as such is the main contributor of sales tax dollars to the state for agricultural crops.

In the past, we have tried to purchase property that the state owns the development rights to but we were thwarted in our efforts to utilize the land for nursery production. We proposed several remediation plans to maintain correct levels of topsoil. These plans included the addition of compost and mineral soil to areas we would have disturbed but each plan was met with resistance and unreasonable demands from various agencies. Options such as "Grow bags" or "pot in pot" production limit our ability to grow the quality trees that our customers want. Pot in pot and "grow bag" operations require much more labor than conventional in ground production and they limit the size plant that can be grown.

We understand the need to preserve farmland and soil for food production, but much of the preserved land is not contributing back to the state's coffers. By allowing the green industry to utilize preserved farmland with equally acceptable remediation plans in place the state would enable the largest segment of agriculture to remain competitive and contribute to the sales tax rolls from harvested trees.

We support efforts that would enable the green industry to utilize preserved farmland for nursery production and protect Connecticut farmland from development. We would hope that the legislature would continue to support all segments of Connecticut agriculture.

Thank you,

Charles Newman
Owner member manager