

**The Environment Committee**

**Public Hearing on Wednesday, February 17, 2009**

**H. B. No. 5272 AN ACT CREATING A RELIEF FUND FOR CONNECTICUT DAIRY FARMERS**

**H. B. No. 5483 AN ACT CONCERNING FINANCIAL RELIEF FOR THE DAIRY INDUSTRY**

Written Testimony submitted by:

Craig Stearns

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Please support both H. B. No. 5272 AN ACT CREATING A RELIEF FUND FOR CONNECTICUT DAIRY FARMERS and H. B. No. 5483 AN ACT CONCERNING FINANCIAL RELIEF FOR THE DAIRY INDUSTRY

My name is Craig Stearns I am a Dairy consultant working for Cargill in Connecticut. I consult with approximately 40 dairy farms in Connecticut and supply them with grain supplements from our Franklin Connecticut feed milling facility. We employ 25 people in our Franklin Connecticut mill as well as a dozen truck drivers from a local trucking company. Approximately sixty percent of our business is the dairy industry. The other forty percent is mostly equine and back yard farming type business. Without the dairy industry we would not survive in Franklin and would end up closing down the facility.

The dairy industry is in real trouble in Connecticut. The State has helped the dairy industry in past years and has helped preserve what is left of an important industry. This year the whole economy is in trouble and there is not a lot of money that is understood. However, I am testifying that most dairy farmers in our State are facing possible financial ruin if things don't improve or they don't get some help. Currently raw milk prices paid to the dairy farmers is record low. The future prices are not any better for most of 2009. Many neighboring states have stepped in and have come up with long term plans to preserve their dairy farms. Connecticut needs to do the same. Dairy farms provide our state with many benefits hundreds of jobs, open space, fresh local milk products, education it adds character to our state. These are just a few examples.

Currently I would say all dairy farms are losing money every day in Connecticut. Costs have far exceeded the revenue coming in. Feed costs alone are about as high as the current raw milk price. Grain prices have fallen some since last year but not nearly as sharply as milk prices. Currently on average a dairy farmer spends about \$5.00-\$6.00 out of every hundred pounds of milk produced just on grain. The forages that they feed the cows was put up last year with high fertilizer and fuel costs and is costing them another \$4.00-\$5.00 per hundred pounds. Add them together and you have \$10-\$11 per hundred spent on feed. The projections on milk prices is going as low as \$12.00 per hundred. That leaves \$1.00 per hundred for labor, fuel, taxes, fertilizer, seed, maintenance, equipment, veterinarian expenses, medicine for cows, etc. I didn't even mention the farm owners living expenses.

These are a few reasons why we need to support these bills raised to help our dairy industry in Connecticut. We need a long term solution to ensure the viability of our dairy farms. Please support H. B. No. 5272 AN ACT CREATING A RELIEF FUND FOR CONNECTICUT DAIRY FARMERS and H. B. No. 5483 AN ACT CONCERNING FINANCIAL RELIEF FOR THE DAIRY INDUSTRY

Thank you, Craig Stearns, Cargill Animal Nutrition