

February 16, 2009

Environment Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Room 3200
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

To Chairman State Senator Edward Meyers, Chairman State Representative Richard Roy,
and all the Honorable Members of the Environment Committee:

This letter serves as written testimony in support of PHB 5272, An Act Creating a Relief Fund for Connecticut Dairy Farmers, and, PHB 5483, An Act Concerning Financial Relief for the Dairy Industry.

I am a life long resident of Connecticut, a business owner in East Hartford, a UConn graduate, and a sixteen year BOE chairman of an eastern Connecticut town (Colchester). I am writing to you as a private citizen, with no political or business connections to the dairy farming industry. I clearly understand the painful and difficult decisions that all of you have to make in response to the thousands of requests for financial relief from the public and private sectors. Every proposed bill has merit and strong arguments in their respective defenses are made.

Dairy Farming, above all industries, is in dire need of financial assistance at this critical time. Wholesale milk prices have dipped well below the national benchmark of \$16.94 per hundredweight and the cost of current production. January 2009 was \$14.12 as compared to January 2008 of \$21.11. March is estimated at \$11.27. The setting of milk prices does not correlate with the cost of milk production. The current prices are too low to allow dairy farms to remain operational. Significantly reduced revenue combined with increased operational expenditures in grain, fuel and fertilizer puts our Connecticut dairy farms on the endangered species list. Although we are all under financial hardship, our Connecticut dairy farms are at risk of extinction. The math does not work.

Another factor that should be taken into strong consideration is the 72,000 acres of open space (2007 data) that our Connecticut dairy farms reside on. Agricultural land is one of our most cost effective tax bases. If this land is lost to residential development when our current recession is over, the financial impact in services to the State and local taxpayers will be significant. In addition, we will lose an important piece of our Connecticut heritage forever. We have already lost approximately 60% of our dairy farms since 1990.

Thank you for reading this letter and giving strong consideration to these two bills. Although we are hearing about financial hardships in many industries, the data strongly indicates that this year is a breaking point for our Connecticut dairy farms. A long term solution is required now.

Sincerely,

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