



**Connecticut Farm Bureau Association**

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**Testimony in Support of: The Budget of the Department of Agriculture**

Submitted by: Donald Tuller, President, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

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*The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of over 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.*

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I would like to express our support for the CT Department of Agriculture Budget, on behalf of the members of the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association. We are particularly pleased to see that the Governor's proposed budget maintains the CT Department of Agriculture as a stand alone agency. The growing Connecticut agricultural economy is one of the few bright spots in an otherwise relatively bleak economic landscape.

The CT DoA was hit particularly hard by the last retirement incentive program. They need to be allowed to fill the vacant inspection positions to meet their statutory responsibility, and it is in the interest of the public safety as well. We do not want to wait until there is a farm related public safety problem due to under inspection, before these inspectors are replaced

I would also like to encourage the committee to consider the benefits of returning the forestry and natural resource functions from the Department of Environmental Protection back to the CT DoA. HB 5363 AN ACT TRANSFERRING THE CONSERVATION FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE would be an interesting option. This makes even more sense with the proposed merger of DEP with the Dept of Energy. There thousands of acres of state owned farmland that is not being utilized, that could be, with different management. Forestry is an agricultural industry. There are some management opportunities with the state owned forestlands. This could translate in increased farm employment, and economic growth,

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture is unique in that it inspects and regulates some aspects of agricultural production, and promotes the marketing of other aspects. It works well and the public, and farmers are the better for it. This sort of activity needs to be encouraged. I urge you to support the Department of Agriculture Budget and by doing so, let them keep up the good work.

Thank you: Don Tuller, President, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association