

March 24, 2011

Dear Senator Harp:

My name is Cecilia Osimanti and I am a sophomore in the Nonnewaug Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience Program in Woodbury, Connecticut. I live in Bethel and attend this regional agriscience school choice program because of the fantastic opportunities it offers.

By getting accepted to this regional agriscience program, it allowed me to grow as a person. Ever since I can remember, I have always wanted to go to a school that had animals and allowed me to interact with what I was learning. In coming to this school, I was able to learn in a way that worked for me. Not only are standard notes taken in my agriscience courses, it is explained in many different examples. For example, in Vet Science, we learned to take the temperature, respiration, and pulse of an animal. The instructions, common temperatures, respiration, and pulse were all taken in class. The following day, the class chose both a small and large animal to take their temperature, respiration, and pulse. In funding the agriscience programs around Connecticut, it would enable these activities to continue.

Nonnewaug's Agriscience Program is also part of a regional high school. This means that not only is there an agricultural program; there are also core subjects that are attended every day. This allows students to continue learning their core subjects while also continually learning in their agriscience course. This allows me, as a student, to keep up with all of my work and learning and not forget anything that was previously learned during either agriscience or core subjects. Another advantage of incorporating the agriscience program into a regional high school is the ability of knowing more people. If the agriscience program was not incorporated, there would be four grade levels of ninety to one hundred students. The regular students get along great with the students in the agriscience program, creating more friendships than if it was a simple agricultural high school. By funding the nineteen regional agriscience schools throughout Connecticut, more students will be able to be accepted into the program.

A requirement of the agriscience program at Nonnewaug High School is to get a "SAE." SAE stands for "supervised agricultural experience" and two hundred paid hours are required each year. This year, I worked in my mother's quarter acre garden, learning about organic pest control, care of a garden and compost, and the ways of a farmer's market. In four weeks, I received one hundred fifty hours. The work that I carried out varied from seed-saving heirloom tomatoes, to weeding the garden of pest-plants, and even to haggling the price of items at the farmer's market. This experience allowed me to explore the production of organic vegetables. I enjoy working in the agricultural field and appreciate and understand the SAE requirements.

Through being a student at Nonnewaug and the agriculture program, I am able to be part of many groups that would not be possible without funding. Nonnewaug's Agriscience Program offers a number of Career Development Events and a number of competitions. I attended and was a competitor in the Northeast Floral Exposition. This was held in Sturbridge, Massachusetts and made it possible for many students to further explore their interests in floral design. The funding for choice schools makes it possible to attend more competitions and have more Career Development Events.