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To: Connecticut General Assembly, Committee on Commerce

Central Connecticut Cooperative Farmers Association, (CCCFA), is a farmer-owned cooperative that was started in 1938 by a group of 17 farmers, with the purpose of improving their farm sustainability and profitability. Today we have over 1000 farm members throughout southern New England and New York. We are one of the only animal feed manufacturing companies left in Connecticut, through our mill and store front we manufacture and distribute feed for every kind of livestock animal and many pet animals as well.

Originally located in East Haven, CT, in 1942 we moved to our current Manchester, CT location which provided our company a larger mill and direct rail service. Currently we have 47 employees working at our location. We provide bulk feed delivery to farms, in addition to bagging all of our own feeds, and we are the only mill in the area that provides an affordable alternative to bag feeds for small back-yard farms through our specialized bulk feed pick up system.

We currently receive approximately 30 rail cars per month containing a variety of feed ingredients. Though we also receive smaller amounts of ingredients by tractor trailer truck, our capacity to receive via the rail provides our company with the ability to be competitive in today's animal feed market. One rail car contains on average the equivalent of 4.5 tractor trailer trucks, if we lost our ability to receive ingredients by rail, we would be increasing tractor trailer traffic to our location by approximately 135 tractor trailer loads per month.

Similar to so many industries today the agricultural industry is besieged with economic challenges, including the constant increase in fuel, electricity, labor, insurance, and feed costs. To combat these challenges farmers are working hard to diversify their markets, rather than working as much with wholesalers, farmers are increasingly turning to farmers markets as a means of selling their products locally. In order to make attending a market profitable for the farmer and customer the expenses faced by the farmer must be manageable, resulting in a reasonable cost to the consumer.

If the Connecticut River Bridge is closed or an additional charge is levied on each car that crosses it our ingredient costs would increase dramatically forcing us to increase our customers cost of feed, which would challenge our ability and the farmer's ability to stay in business. As a result farms would be forced to increase the price of their products and farmers markets and their customers across the state would suffer. The act of repairing or closing the Connecticut River Bridge will have a huge impact on all the companies relying on rail transportation in this part of the state, but it will also have a huge impact on animal agriculture both in Connecticut and the rest of Southern New England. When you vote in favor of Raised Bill No. 1137 you will be voting in favor of continuing a competitive agriculture marketplace in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Donald D. Domina  
General Manager