

ROXBURY LAND TRUST
PO Box 51, 7 South Street
Roxbury, CT 06783

March 4, 2011

To: Committee on The Environment

From: Roxbury Land Trust, Roxbury, CT

Re: HB 5203 ~ Sponsored by Rep Arthur O'Neill, 69th District

**AN ACT AUTHORIZING AN AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT
ON THE LANDS OF THE SOUTHBURY TRAINING SCHOOL.**

The Roxbury Land Trust strongly urges support for this unique opportunity to preserve in perpetuity the agricultural lands of the Southbury Training School, one of the last large parcels of unprotected farmland in the Southbury area and as such is a key to the survival of agriculture in this part of Connecticut. A portion of these lands is contiguous to a 100-acre parcel donated by bequest to Roxbury Land Trust.

One of the mission's of the Roxbury Land Trust is "saving our farms". With \$2.9 million in grants from the State's Open Space and Watershed Acquisition Fund we preserved 3 historic farms of some 800 acres of farmland. In addition RLT has an active working farmland program with leases with 5 local farmers.

It is critical to the State's economy, to local farming and for local food supplies to preserve this land and to continue to reach for the goal of preserving 130,000 acres of CT farmland. The State is dismally short of this goal with a mere 48,000 acre protected. A recent study by the University of Connecticut estimates agriculture contributes \$3.5 billion to the economy and provides 20,000 jobs.

The State has spent millions of dollars over the years purchasing development rights in order to preserve farmland. Preserving the farmland at the Training School **would cost** the State and us taxpayers **nothing**.

Please support HB 5203 and protect this vital farmland.

Susan Payne, Executive Director

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