



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
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Testimony in Support of:

H.B. 5472 AN ACT AUTHORIZING LOCAL AND REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL COUNCILS

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

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 Steve Cassano, Representative Linda Gentile and members of the Planning and Development Committee:

H.B. 5472 authorizes municipalities to form local and regional agricultural councils and commissions. Agricultural commissions are a new and growing initiative amongst Connecticut municipalities who want to promote and maintain agricultural viability in their communities. Agricultural commissions play an important role in local farmland preservation efforts, provide guidance to other land use agencies and commissions on agriculturally related issues, help promote local farms and businesses, provide education and resources related to agriculture and seek grant opportunities to help support local agriculture.

Connecticut agriculture is unique and diverse. The size and types of farming operations varies across Connecticut. From smaller farms in Fairfield county that have a heavier focus on equine to larger dairy farms in eastern Connecticut to aquaculture operations along the shoreline. Local agricultural commissions are comprised of farmers and non-farmers who live and work in their communities and understand the unique characteristics and needs of their communities. Agricultural commissions are advisory not regulatory and are comprised of volunteers requiring little if any support from municipal budgets. If an agricultural commission can save one farm, it has paid for itself for decades into the future. If this bill becomes law, individual communities, that do not have sufficient critical mass of interested farmers and other interested citizens, can band together to form a regional agricultural council or commission that would serve those participating communities jointly. This would further the goal of creating as many farm friendly communities as possible.

There is other legislation such as CGS 7-131a which authorizes municipal conservation commissions. H.B. 5472 would do for agriculture what CGS 7-131 has done for natural resources.

H.B. 5472 is a result of a proposal put forth by the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association Right to Farm Committee which focused on land use legislation and we urge your support on this important initiative.