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To: Planning and Development Committee

RE: **Support HB5470** AN ACT CONCERNING LOCAL PLANS OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

Section 8-23 of the CT General Statutes empowers towns to form Planning Commissions and further mandates them to develop a Town Plan that sets forth the desired architecture of the town. The Town Plan is the blueprint upon which all zoning and other regulation is promulgated as well as being the functional developmental vision of the town. While CGS 8-23 (c)(10) states the Plan shall consider "the protection and preservation of agriculture" it does not mandate municipalities to operationalize any such consideration.

It is imperative that the language in this statute regarding agriculture be strengthened towards the end of preserving and making sustainable existing farms, as well as provide for new agricultural ventures. Farmland is the most easily developed land, and once it is turned into residences, parking lots, and big box structures it is lost forever to agriculture and food production.

Agriculture in CT needs to be fostered and protected in order to make our State sustainable. Currently agriculture is threatened by the high value of land for residential suburban development. This leads to the sale of agricultural land and further residential development. Residential development spends $1.10 in services for every dollar in taxes collected, leading to negative revenue flow, where as agriculture only spends $.36 for every dollar of taxes collected.

Agriculture makes us more secure by decentralizing our food sources and thereby protecting them from contamination, and making our food supply readily available. It is environmentally responsive as it reduces the State's carbon footprint, and preserves open space and wildlife habitat. It strengthens our State's economy by providing in-State jobs, bringing people into our state to spend money through agri-tourism, and by supporting other state business which sell the supplies, equipment, and services it needs. Agriculture enables residential community involvement because farmers live where they work, it teaches children and young adults life-skills, and it promotes healthy, happy outdoor living, a physically strong and active life, and an ethic of personal responsibility.

Sincerely,