

Benjamin Freund

January 31, 2011

326 Norfolk Road

East Canaan, CT 06024

Environment Committee

Dear Chairman and Committee members,

Please support HB 5202, Bonding for Farmland Preservation

I farm in northwestern Connecticut with my brother. Our farm began with my father in 1949. We farm 800 acres of pasture, row crops, forest, and vegetables. We have participated in the Farmland Preservation Program 2 times. It has been an integral part of our farm's success.

In 1985 the neighbor farmer was retiring. He sold the development rights to Connecticut making the agricultural rights affordable to our farm. With this transaction the State allowed us to double our owned land base and extend preserved agricultural land to the border of the Housatonic State Forest. Important opportunities like this cannot wait. When the land converts it is gone forever. Now this track is preserved forever and produces crops to feed dairy cows that supply milk to Connecticut schools and consumers.

In 2009 an estate settlement threatened a critical piece of farmland that links our home farm to the land preserved in 1985. I was able to work with the Connecticut Farmland Trust to evaluate the prime and important aspects of this 55 acre parcel. I then negotiated to buy the land having confidence that 16 months later the strong Farmland Preservation Program would be there to purchase the development portion of that land so I could then afford the residual mortgage on the agricultural value. Furthermore the State was able to leverage federal money to lessen the impact on Connecticut tax payers. That is important to note because farmland preservation leverages federal dollars and private concerns to provide Connecticut with preservation of this most precious resource.

Now we have extended the preserved parcel from 202 acres to 257 acres. We have built a block of permanently preserved land that will always allow strong agricultural production in our neighborhood. Neighbors enjoy our land. Hunters from the local Rod and Gun club have always enjoyed the land for bird releases. Wetlands are protected. Cows are content and producing milk. Vegetables are direct marketed.

Finally I must emphasize the importance of a consistently funded program through time. Land transactions are complex and can span multiple years. The State must have a long vision and commitment in order to get the land owner confidence necessary to meet the State goals for farmland preservation.

Please pass HB 5202 to bond sufficient funds to keep the face of Connecticut clean, beautiful, and productive.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Freund