

Environment Committee
Room 3200, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

March 7, 2011

**HB 5203: AN ACT AUTHORIZING AN AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT
ON THE LANDS OF THE SOUTHBURY TRAINING SCHOOL**

Co-Chairs Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and Members of the Environment
Committee:

My name is George Hindinger and I am a farmer from Hamden, CT and
Chairperson of the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board. I am submitting
testimony today in support of HB5203.

HB5203 authorizes the grant of an agricultural easement on the lands of the
Southbury Training School which covers over 600 acres of farmland. The
Southbury Training School property is one of six properties that were initially
identified by a sub-committee of the advisory board as excellent tracts of land for
permanent preservation. By using the same scoring criteria that the State
Department of Agriculture utilizes in reviewing properties entering into the
Farmland Preservation Program, the Southbury Training School property scored
the highest among the other six properties. This property has a large number of
total acres and a large number of acres that contain prime and important
farmland. It is our hope as a board that this is a first step in permanently
preserving thousands of acres of state owned farmland.

All of these initial six properties are currently leased for agriculture - but they are
vulnerable. State-held farmland has historically been subjected to special acts
that transfer these lands to non-state entities for non-agricultural use. In recent
years there have been nine such transfers that totaled 165 acres.

The benefits would be to permanently preserve a significant amount of valuable
farmland at little or no cost to the state. It is also our hope as a board that as this
issue continues forward, the Department of Agriculture be involved in
establishing an area that is agreeable to all entities involved.

Sincerely,
George Hindinger, Chairperson
Farmland Preservation Advisory Board