



Testimony on H.B. No. 5014 AN ACT MAKING  
ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR  
ENDING JUNE 30, 2013 on the Department of Agriculture  
February 15, 2012

Good evening, Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Senator Duff and Representative Hulburt and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide anti-hunger and food security organization. In that position I sit on the Farmland Preservation Board, the Milk Promotion Board and the Milk Regulation Board as a representative for the low-income food insecure and consumers in the state.

I would like to address several areas in the budget for the Department of Agriculture. As you know, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture supports many initiatives that help people eat healthy and nutritious foods that are critical to the elderly and pregnant women and their young children. They are:

- **WIC Farmer's Market Coupons** allow those accessing the WIC program to use coupons at area Farmer's Markets and supermarkets for fresh fruits and vegetables. These coupons are a source of income for many of the state's farmers.
- **Senior Farmer's Market Coupons** provide low-income seniors with coupons for eligible foods at Farmer's Markets and community supported agriculture programs.

The Farmer's Market coupons are very successful. Every season we, at End Hunger Connecticut!, are asked how to get into the rotation to hand them out. There just are not enough to go around. Not only are they a way for many to get fresh locally grown produce at an affordable rate they are the life blood for our farmers. While we are appreciative that the programs did not sustain any cuts, we were hopeful that, given their popularity, they would have some additional funds put in them, especially as they were cut in last month's rescissions.

As we are embarking on a partnership with AARP-CT on SNAP outreach we would be able to connect so many more people to the program.

The cuts to the Department of Agriculture amount to nine percent of its total budget for staffing. The Department is responsible for bringing Connecticut grown products to the forefront, to assuring that our farmland is preserved while preserving the Connecticut quality of life at the same time. Additionally there is aquaculture, protecting us from infectious diseases, and protecting our food supply. The Department builds our local economy through support for farms

and other agricultural initiatives. In fact the Department is the basis of food security, healthy and safe accessible food.

The nine percent cut creates a staffing issue with an already stretched department. As more and more people look to our local food system for their food we must ensure that it is safe. These cuts take the department, and Connecticut, in the wrong direction. We need to be celebrating our agricultural heritage while ensuring that our food system is safe and accessible. That means having adequate staff to do the very necessary jobs that they do.

I urge you to reinstate the cuts to the Department of Agriculture and to increase the food coupons to make up for the loss of the recessions.

Thank you.