Hello, my name is Christa Roth and I am currently a junior taking the Horticulture class in the agriscience program at Nonnewaug High School. In addition, I am taking regular courses such as physics, pre-calculus, English, and A.P. U.S. History to prepare me for college. I commute daily from Danbury to Woodbury to attend school. Once I graduate from Nonnewaug High School next year, I plan to pursue a career in plant genetics in college.The agriscience program at Nonnewaug is extremely beneficial to students and has helped me prepare for a future career. During class, we learn everything about numerous aspects of the horticulture industry from flower arranging to the cutting edge of plant science. The unique instruction in the horticulture class has taught me about different fields of study and also about common techniques used in each field. The agriscience program has already helped so many students, including my sister who is currently a freshman attending Cornell University. The courses she took while enrolled in the program, the career building and public speaking skills she learned through the agriscience program at Nonnewaug made her stand out while she was applying to colleges.

I would like to read to you a letter from Pride's Corner Farms to illustrate how much the horticulture industry relies on graduates from the agriscience program.

Prides Corner Farms is a diversified 500 acre wholesale production nursery located in Lebanon, CT that grows plants for customers all over the Northeast & Mid-Atlantic region. Our product lineup includes perennials, grasses, herbs, native plants, trees, shrubs, & edible ornamentals. As a large employer in the Northeast, we are actively seeking individuals that are interested in developing a career in horticulture. We are looking for enthusiastic, positive minded people that like working outdoors and have an interest in plants. We provide on the job training, which is ideal for candidates that are just finishing their education and have not yet had the opportunity to enter the workplace. We have full time openings available, and are offering summer positions for those that are returning to school in the fall.

We are particularly interested in candidates that have some horticultural education, either at the vocational or college level. We are also very interested in people that have actively participated in the FFA or 4-H programs, as we know these programs foster strong leadership & business skills. The number of students graduating from these types of programs certainly seems to be on the decline in our state. As a large employer, it is difficult to find job candidates that have a true working interest in

production horticulture. We are forced to recruit out of state employees due to the lack of qualified and interested candidates coming out of our school systems.

We ask that our state continue as well as increase funding to support our 19 regional agriscience educational centers. Agriculture is a 3.6 billion dollar industry in Connecticut. Our company employs 500 employees during our peak season, and has over 200 full time employees. We need students trained in the horticulture field so that they are prepared to enter the workforce upon graduation. Our industry is relying on your support to make this possible!