

**Concerning Support for House Bill 5117 AN ACT CONCERNING
GENETICALLY-ENGINEERED FOODS**

*Testimony submitted on February 22, 2012, by Farmer Steve Munno, Woodbridge, CT,
on behalf of the New CT Farmer Alliance*

The *New CT Farmer Alliance (NCTFA)* formed in the summer of 2010 with the aim to bring together emerging and established CT farmers of all kinds, across the lines of organic and conventional, from dairy, meat and vegetable producers. Our mission is to identify and develop support systems and structures to nurture a successful and diverse agricultural landscape in our state.

Farm products grown in CT are currently enjoying great success. With the public's increasing interest in local food, the sale of CT farm products is seeing increasing success, and there is clear potential for more growth in the years ahead. As a result, CT is likely to see more job growth in this sector, helping to strengthen our local economies. With better-informed consumers before them, it is imperative that farmers in CT be supported to meet consumer demand for farm products free of Genetic Engineering, and that all products containing Genetic Engineering be labeled as such.

Food consumers in CT want to make informed choices. Throughout the state, be it at farmer's markets, health food stores or groceries stores, consumers want to know details about what they are purchasing. Was this grown in CT? Where in CT? Is it certified organic? Is it grown using organic practices? Were pesticides and herbicides used? Is this a Genetically Engineered crop? Does this product contain any GMOs? Consumers are looking for answers about their food, and farmers are increasingly hearing that their customers want products that are free of genetic engineering. The passage of this bill will help consumers make informed choices, while supporting the ability of farmers to meet the consumer demands.

Today's new and young farmers have justifiable fear of cross-pollination from Genetically Engineered crops. Biotech companies are not held accountable for the contamination of property such as organic and non-Genetically Engineered crops and seed. Current Genetically Engineered crops on the market which could potentially impact NCTFA farmers include, corn, alfalfa, zucchini, yellow squash, beets and chard. The integrity of a farm, and their commitment to providing non-GMO crops and products to consumers, is threatened when the potential for cross-pollination exists and neighboring farms are permitted to use GMO in an undisclosed fashion.

Today's consumers are better informed about their food and nutrition options, and seek to make healthier choices for themselves, their families, their communities and their environment. Accordingly, today's farmers have an increasing desire to be responsible stewards of the land and an increasing awareness of the potential pitfalls created by the forces of biotechnology and agribusiness. In recent decades, farmers and citizens in the US and around the globe have suffered the consequences

of the lack of appropriate research, or the false claims of safety from the biotechnology industry attached to chemicals that found their way in to our soils and foods, such as DDT, PCBs and Agent Orange. We do not want to make these mistakes again. And with the requirement for labeling of Genetically Engineered foods, and development of best practices for GMO farming, this bill is a step in the right direction.

With this bill, CT has the potential to be a leader in an area in which the people are clearly demanding leadership. Farmers throughout CT are meeting these demands by committing to the growth and production of non-GMO crops, seeds and farm products, and labeling them accordingly. The NCTFA supports this bill, and hopes to see the state continue to take action to nurture a successful and diverse agriculture landscape in our state.