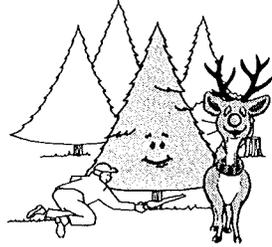


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# DZEN TREE FARM, INC.

*"Where Family Traditions Are Made!"*



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March 7, 2012

Testimony in favor of Raised Bill 5258

Good morning members of the Environmental Committee,

My name is John Dzen, Jr. and the name of my business is Dzen Tree Farm, Inc. We raise 100 acres of choose and cut your own Christmas Trees in South Windsor. I am here today to speak in favor of Bill 5258. Our business like many agricultural businesses in Connecticut is becoming more dependent on the theme of agri-entertainment. In years past we have rented reindeer for the month of December for their educational and entertainment value to our customers. The price of the one month rental meets or exceeds the cost of year round animal care. If we owned reindeer there would be other opportunities to use them to produce income. My oldest son is a student at the vo-ag program at Rockville high school and is looking for an animal project for school. My youngest two children are always looking a project on the farm. If we succeed in getting bill 5258 passed into law, we intend on purchasing reindeer.

The state of Connecticut allowed the year round ownership of reindeer for many years before the concerns of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) developed. About ten years ago, the USDA recommended that each state institute a lock down and ban all of the 34 species of deer. I can only find evidence of CWD being found in white tail, black tail, elk and mule deer. The CWD concerns in reindeer have never developed in the past ten years. In your own OLR Research Report from February 5, 2009 entitled "Are Reindeer Susceptible to Chronic Wasting Disease?" Paul Frisman says "there is not yet a definitive answer to the question". He goes on to

say "No cases of CWD in reindeer or caribou have been reported". In your own OLR Research Report from July 17, 2009 entitled "State Regulations on the Importation of Reindeer" Jillian Redding outlines the laws for seven different states. I believe these two documents helped shape the current Connecticut law that allows reindeer in the state for the month of December. Bill 5258 incorporates the regulations from many of these states that allow reindeer ownership today. Bill 5258 includes many common sense ideas. Before you buy a used car from an out of state dealer, you hire a certified mechanic to check the vehicle from head to toe. You verify the identification number for the car. You research the maintenance history of other cars made by the same company. You demand that the dealer provide you with a detailed history of the vehicle and its owners. You would never make a large investment in a used car from an out of state dealer if you were uncertain about the condition of the car. Bill 5258 requires you to possess a veterinary report of inspection for the individually identified reindeer. You must possess documentation that the reindeer came from a herd that was monitored for three different diseases for a period of time. A reindeer farmer would never want to make a large investment and commitment and bring an unhealthy reindeer to his own farm.

It should also be noted that anyone wishing to own reindeer in Connecticut would still be required to obey various laws set up by the federal government including the Congressional Reindeer Act of 1937, United States Department of Agriculture and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

In summary, I would like to encourage you to pass Bill 5258. The bill sets up very strict rules that would minimize the risk of reindeer transferring any problems into the state of Connecticut. The Bill would be one more opportunity for family farms in Connecticut to produce more income and survive.