

TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT STATE GRANGE IN SUPPORT OF  
RAISED BILL 6314, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN REVISIONS TO THE  
COMMUNITY FARMS PROGRAM AND RAISED BILL 6316, AN ACT CONCERNING  
THE STATE PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS FOR AGRICULTURAL LAND  
PRESERVATION

FEBRUARY 15, 2013

I am Gordon Gibson of Vernon, Legislative Liaison for the Connecticut State Grange. I am speaking today in support of Raised Bill 6314, An Act Concerning Certain Revisions to the Community Farms Program and Raised Bill 6316, An Act Concerning the State Purchase of Development Rights for Agricultural Land Preservation.

Section 22-26nn of the General Statutes authorizes the Commissioner of Agriculture to establish a community farms program to preserve small parcels of locally important farmland that are not large enough to be considered for preservation under the State's program to preserve farmland. The existing Section 22-26nn does not provide detailed standards for the stewardship of land protected under this statute on a par with the program for preserving larger parcels of farmland preserved under Section 22-26cc of the General Statutes. Raised Bill 6314 will correct this problem by adding criteria taken essentially verbatim from Section 22-26cc. The Grange has for many years supported the preservation of farmland throughout Connecticut. The Grange believes the smaller family farm is an important component of our agricultural industry and community and therefore supports the preservation of smaller parcels of prime farmland found throughout Connecticut.

In some situations it is desirable or essential for the local municipality to provide a portion of the funds needed to preserve a parcel of farmland. Subsection (e) of Section 22-26cc provides that when this occurs the State and the municipality may jointly own the development rights easement provided joint ownership by the municipality shall be limited to land within its boundaries. Farm boundaries often cross town lines with a relatively small portion of the farm being in a different town than the main portion of the farm. This creates problems when one, but not both, of the municipalities where the land to be preserved is located contribute towards the preservation of the land. Raised Bill 6316 will eliminate the restriction that a municipality may jointly own an easement only within its own borders. The Grange supports Raised Bill 6316 as it will eliminate the problems that occur when only one municipality participates in the preservation of a parcel of land located in two municipalities.

However, I want to bring to the committee's attention a potential conflict between Raised Bills 6314 and 6316. The additions to Section 22-26nn of the General Statutes proposed in Raised Bill 6314 are taken verbatim from Section 22-26cc of the General Statutes. Specifically, the proposed new Subsection (f), located at the bottom of page 2, is taken from

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Subsection (e) of Section 22-26cc but does not include the changes proposed to this subsection in Raised Bill 6314 concerning a municipality jointly owning an easement outside of its boundaries. The Grange recommends that the Environment Committee revise Raised Bill 6316 to make it consistent with the changes proposed in the new subsection (f) in Raised Bill 6314.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

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