STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

CONNECTICUT GROWN

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By the Connecticut Department of Agriculture

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S.B. 804 – AN ACT CONCERNING A PREFERENCE FOR CONNECTICUT GROWN PROTEIN IN CERTAIN STATE CONTRACTS

Chairmen Meyer and Gentile, Vice Chairs Maynard and Albis, Ranking Members Chapin and Shaban and members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture respectfully requests your support of An Act Including Connecticut Grown Protein in State Procurement Language.

The proposed legislation would simply adjust language in an existing statute concerning state contract procurement, CGS 4a-51(b), to include preference (when comparable in cost) for additional Connecticut Grown proteins other than milk, cheese, and eggs. Specifically, beef, pork, and lamb would be added.

This adjustment is important because Connecticut farms today are producing significantly more beef, pork, and lamb today than when the statute's language was enacted. In addition, consumer interest in and demand for these types of Connecticut Grown proteins also have risen during the same timeframe. The proposed language provides significant market opportunity for Connecticut's meat producers, while at the same time better allowing for state institutions to meet the growing demand for the purchase of these products.

Over the past year, the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development has interviewed, surveyed, and conducted listing sessions with hundreds of agricultural stakeholders in the state in the development of the first-ever holistic, strategic plan for Connecticut agriculture. In this process, the council identified as a high priority the enhancement of farm-to-institution channels, due to the vast opportunity institutions provide for increasing consumption of Connecticut Grown farm products.

Public Act 11-189 specifically charges the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development with making "recommendations to the Department of Agriculture on ways to increase the percentage of consumer dollars spent on Connecticut-grown fresh produce and farm products, including, but not limited to, ways to increase the amount of money spent by residents of the

state on locally-grown farm products, by 2020, to not less than five per cent of all money spent by such residents on food."

The proposed act would help Connecticut significantly in achieving that five percent goal by 2020. Because many institutions serve thousands of meals each week, the incorporation of additional Connecticut Grown products into their foodservice operations can translate into millions of additional dollars going to Connecticut farmers, related agricultural businesses, and the state's economy.

The Department of Agriculture and the Department of Administrative Services have been conducting training meetings with farmers to encourage them to participate in the state procurement process. This effort, along with continually improving communications about such opportunities, will also facilitate the use of more Connecticut Grown products—including proteins—by state institutions.

The proposed act does not require state contract users to pay more for Connecticut Grown products, nor does it place any other financial burden on them. It does provide them with additional options and encourages them to use products grown and produced by Connecticut agricultural businesses, thus fueling economic growth and meeting consumer demand for these Connecticut Grown products.

Thank you for your time today and for your thoughtful consideration of this testimony. Please let us know if we can provide any additional information that would be helpful.