



Support of HB 5419
Environment Committee
Submitted by: Jim Gooch, Executive Director, CT Farmland Trust
March 7, 2014

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and honorable members of the Environment Committee:

Connecticut Farmland Trust appreciates this opportunity to provide comments today in **strong support of HB 5419, An Act Concerning the Preservation of the Savin Farm in Lebanon.**

Connecticut Farmland Trust ("CFT") is the only land trust in the state dedicated to the permanent protection of working farms. Since our founding in 2002, we have protected over 2,100 acres of farmland, and have helped the CT Department of Agriculture and other partners to protect nearly 1,000 more. CFT accepts donations of and purchases agricultural conservation easements and farmland; partners with towns and land trusts to identify threatened farms and opportunities for land protection; and partners with communities throughout the state to encourage local farmland preservation efforts through outreach and support to farmers, local officials and community groups.

CFT applauds your leadership and commitment to securing permanent protection for the Southbury Training School last year. We strongly support HB 5419 that will permanently protect the next most significant state owned agricultural land, Savin Farm in Lebanon. The Farmland Preservation Advisory Board did an exhaustive study in 2010 of all state-owned farmland and identified Savin Farm as the second property most worthy of protection, just after Southbury Training School. Savin's high percentage of the best agricultural soils, more than 500 acres of pasture, corn and forest land, and location in one of the state's most active agricultural communities make it a critical public resource to preserve.

Preservation of Savin Farm is a win-win. The state will add 575 acres of prime farmland to its list of protected farms and will be that much closer to its goal of 130,000 acres of preserved farmland. While preservation projects can take years to complete and have high price tags, the state can protect Savin Farm in a short-period of time at minimal cost.

On behalf of Connecticut Farmland Trust, I strongly urge the Committee to act favorably on HB 5149. Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.