



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
775 Bloomfield Ave., Windsor, CT 06095-2322
(860) 768-1100 • Fax (860) 768-1108 • www.cfba.org

March 17, 2014

Submitted by: Henry N. Talmage, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of over 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile and Members of the Environment Committee:

Raised Bill No. 444 AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN "IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS" PROGRAM.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau understands and supports the role and responsibility the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has with respect to protecting habitat for a healthy and diverse system of natural resources. We would only encourage that the designation of "important bird areas" specified in this bill be incorporated into the on-going process of conducting a state-wide inventory of state-owned DEEP land to determine the best conservation use of those lands. We are concerned that the provisions in RB 444 could be utilized to by-pass the more comprehensive analysis of all appropriate conservation goals including the use of certain DEEP land for agricultural use.

Raised Bill No. 443 AN ACT CONCERNING PESTICIDES ON SCHOOL GROUNDS, PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, ATHLETIC FIELDS, AND MUNICIPAL GREENS.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau is greatly concerned with the direction this bill is apparently taking. It is our understanding that an amendment to the bill will be presented at the public hearing that will propose a ban on the sale and use of grass seed and ornamental plants developed using genetically modified techniques. From what we can ascertain the argument against such products is that they will result in the use of more pesticides compared to conventional developed plants. This information is simply not true. Yes, in the case of "Roundup ready" products the use of Roundup increases but the use of other, more dangerous herbicides is greatly reduced resulting in an overall significant reduction. What about plants developed using genetically modified techniques that have other beneficial characteristics like drought tolerance? What about feed corn? Corn is a grass. Would the ban include the sale and use of GMO feed corn seed in Connecticut? That would decimate our dairy industry which has been using these products safely for many years. The point is this committee should hear more information from a wider group of experts and scientist before any action is taken in this direction. Our members have nothing to react to other than press releases and rumors as to the proposed amendment language. This is unfair. We are incredibly disappointed that on an issue with such magnitude and ramifications for the agricultural and landscape industry we might not have an open and transparent process of hearing from experts and constituents that will be directly impacted. We therefore urge the defeat of this bill and its proposed amendment.

(continued on reverse)

Raised Bill No. 5080 AN ACT CONCERNING DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY AND AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY ON SUNDAYS.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports RB 5080 as it allows the Commissioner of DEEP to authorize landowners to utilize methods consistent with professional wildlife management principles in the case of severe nuisance or ecological damage. The bill also authorizes bow and arrow hunting of deer on private property on Sunday. Both of these measures are important tools to allow landowners to manage deer populations and reduce the damage to agricultural crops. We therefore support adoption of RB 5080 as presented.

Raised Bill No. 5416 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LIVESTOCK CARE STANDARDS ADVISORY COUNCIL AND PROHIBITING THE USE OF CERTAIN ENCLOSURES FOR GESTATING SOWS.

Connecticut farmers are greatly concerned with the health and well-being of their animals. They strive to adopt and utilize agricultural best management practices developed by animal production experts. The Connecticut Farm Bureau believes that decisions on livestock production practices and standards should be based on sound science and include input from experts and not be based on emotional reactions to photos of animal abuse from outside of Connecticut.

To that end, the Connecticut Farm Bureau supports Section 1 of HB5416, which creates a Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council that would provide a mechanism for input from experts and allow the Commissioner of Agriculture and the legislature to make informed decisions on appropriate livestock care and handling regulations based on sound science and agricultural best management practices used here in Connecticut.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau opposes Section 2 of HB5416, which seeks to ban the use of gestation crates for gestating sows. Gestation crates are not being used in Connecticut. Regardless, Section 2 seeks to implement policy that we feel is best vetted first by the Advisory Council as established in Section 1. The issue then can be fully evaluated with input from many experts and appropriate policy recommendations for Connecticut can then be made based on the facts and science.

Connecticut has a rich history of animal agriculture and we believe that with the increased demand for local farm products, animal agriculture can grow in Connecticut to help meet that demand. We will continue to employ best animal care practices as we provide more locally grown products to Connecticut residents.

The Governor's Council on Agricultural Development has made recommendations on how to increase the percentage of food products grown and consumed in CT to 5% by the year 2020. Although today we produce less than half that, we are looking at a bright future of growing agriculture in our state. Having a Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council is an important step forward towards advancing those goals. Therefore we urge the adoption of Section 1. of RB 5416.