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February 21, 2014

Greetings members of the Planning and Development Committee
Senator Osten, co-chair
Rep. Rojas, co-chair

I own two barns, along with numerous outbuildings, a cottage and a typical 1830's farmhouse on an historic dairy farm property that fronts an oft-used east-west road in the town of Redding. It is a landmark property and the older of the two barns is listed on the Historic Barns of Connecticut registry. Many Reddingites thank me for keeping the property "like it always was" and preserving their view of the aesthetic Little River Valley, which I have done with a conservation easement and ongoing repairs and maintenance of the structures. Just imagine, eight new roofs were needed when I bought the place in 1994!! The Redding Land Trust purchased the field across the road from the farm - once part of the property - on this town-designated scenic highway.

I'd like to think this valley provides one of those sublime, iconic "historic Connecticut views" that have disappeared at an alarming rate in the last thirty years. The work and resources this preservation requires is not for the faint-hearted homeowner. While it provides great public benefit, there is virtually no incentive to do so. I applaud the notion of providing incentives to help protect and preserve our historic places; and barns are a delightful element of Connecticut's historic past, agricultural operations, pastoral expanses and charming roads. I would hope, as thoughtful evaluators of this proposed Bill, that you will also consider just what a tourist might drive to Connecticut to see these days. As many thousands of trees are removed, it is probably not the tree-lined old byways.

Please support this proposal to provide some incentives to barn owners, like me.

Thank you for listening,
Laurie Heiss
Cross Highway
Redding, CT