February 21, 2014

Planning & Development Committee
Senator Steve Cassano, co-chairman
Representative Jason Rojas, co-chairman

In Support of SB 114 - An Act Establishing a Property Tax Program to Encourage the Preservation of Historic Barns.

My name is Nancy Strong of the Strong Family Farm in Vernon. I am here today to speak in **support** of SB 114.

The Strong Farm barn was built in 1917 by my great-grandfather, Nathan Morgan Strong, after a fire took the original farm. Seven generations of Strongs have lived and worked on the farm and kept up the barn for the next generations in Vernon Center. It still remains an iconic view to all that pass by.

In the past few years, the barn has been in drastic need of repairs. My father, Norman Strong, always kept the barn painted and did emergency maintenance as the funds were available. When the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation first offered its small matching grant for a feasibility/conditions study of the barn, we were honored to be one of their first awardees in this grant program. This study outlined a time table of work that needed to be done on the barn. In the next years, CT Trust for Historic Preservation added a stabilization grant program. We have been lucky to be awarded a couple of small "matching" stabilization grants to go towards a new roof on part of the barn and repair the barn foundation. We always spent more than the match to get the work needed accomplished, but the grant money eased the burden. After the winter storms of 2011, the huge hay barn has become in drastic need of repair and replacement. The roof work needed goes beyond the timeline of repairs set forth by the conditions study, along with the repair and replacement of floors and windows.

SB 114 would authorize the Town of Vernon to grant property tax relief to this historic barn. We have always maintained its structure to the best of our ability and will strive to do so as long as the Strong Family Farm exists. This tax easement will go back into securing the structural integrity of the barn for future generations to cherish and prosper from.

Former and present residents state that the Strong Family Farm is the one place that they can count on that will not change in Vernon. This barn plays a significant part in Vernon's heritage and cultural landscape. This easement will help in the burden of maintaining the barn for future generations.