



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

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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 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.

Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis and members of the Environment Committee,

Testimony in support of:

S.B. No. 346 AN ACT CONCERNING THE FARMLAND RESTORATION AND VACANT LANDS PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports S.B. 346 as it allows the Commissioner of Agriculture to reimburse farmers for the cost of farmland restoration plans including those that lease farmland (for at least 5 years) from the state or local municipalities and allows for cost reimbursement of such plans up to 90%. In addition it expands the use of restoration funds to include fencing to exclude wildlife and manage livestock and additional incidental land clearing activities. We believe these are important enhancements to Farmland Restoration Program and urge their adoption.

S.B. No. 348 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALE OF FARM PRODUCTS AS "CONNECTICUT-GROWN" AND CERTIFICATION FOR "CONNECTICUT-GROWN MARKETS AND RESTAURANTS".

The Connecticut Farm supports "farm-of-origin" labeling as described in Sec. 1 of SB 348 at CT Certified Farmers Markets but does not support the provision that requires mandatory "farm-of-origin" labeling at all retail establishments selling CT Grown. We believe that because Certified Farmers Markets are "producer only" markets, consumers shopping at those markets do so with the expectation that the products being sold there are in fact produced by the people selling them. In contrast, consumers buying from other retailers selling CT Grown currently are presented with products that meet the definition of CT Grown without specific information about what farm in CT it came from. Whereas we encourage retailers of CT Grown to be accountable about the use of the CT Grown label we are concerned that retailers might choose to not participate in the CT Grown program if they find it too cumbersome to track and label produce from several CT farms. We therefore support limiting the mandatory "farm-of-origin" labeling provision described in Sec. 1 to CT Certified Farmers Markets.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports Sec. 2 as presented in SB 348. The current thresholds for the "Farm Fresh Market" program have proved to be unworkable and as a result there has not been participation in the program. The new thresholds as well as renaming the program to be consistent with the "CT Grown" programs will likely result in better utilization and expand consumer access to "CT Grown" products.

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association - *The Voice of Connecticut Agriculture*

S.B. No. 867 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ENFORCEMENT OF FIREWOOD TRANSPORT RESTRICTIONS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports SB 867. The movement of infected woody material in violation of state and federal quarantine orders jeopardizes the health of Connecticut's forests and is detrimental to the economic well-being of the Connecticut forest products industry. We support measures to deter illegal transport of quarantined woody material to protect Connecticut's forest resource.

H.B. No. 6727 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DESIGNATION OF HEARING OFFICERS BY THE COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports HB6727 because it provides the Commissioner of Agriculture operational flexibility to designate additional qualified individuals as hearing officers and to conduct administrative hearings important to carry out his responsibilities.

H.B. No. 6729 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF CERTAIN NOISE-MAKING DEVICES FOR AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports HB 6729 which will expand the Commissioner of Agriculture's authority to manage the evaluation, approval and enforcement of the use of certain noise making devices as exists under in current law.

H.B. No. 6731 AN ACT CONCERNING THE TREATMENT OF CERTAIN FARM LAND FOR PURPOSES OF THE ESTATE TAX.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports HB 6731. The farming community and land conservation advocates have been working hard to encourage initiatives to protect CT's farmland for decades. As a state, we have made significant progress by permanently protecting over 40,000 acres of farmland using a variety of land preservation tools. HB 6731 would add to those tools by lessening threats to farm succession in CT by increasing the exemption for the transfer of qualified farmland in CT estate tax law to match that of federal estate tax law. This will result is less conversion of farmland out of agricultural uses and allow farm families to remain on the land. Currently the federal estate tax exemption is \$5,430,000 compared to CT estate tax exemption of \$2,000,000. In both federal and state estate tax law provisions exist that allow farmland to be valued at its current use value (PA 490) instead of full fair market value as long as the land stays in agriculture for 10 years. This is helpful but the lower estate tax exemption in CT coupled with the relative high value of farmland even with current use assessment can force families to sell the farm to settle the CT estate taxes and trigger the development of the land. A bit overly generous, HB 6731 as written would exempt the fair market value of any farmland classified under PA 490 from estate taxes. Alternatively, we would propose inserting "up to \$3,430,000" after the words "fair market value" on line 34 in Sec.1(C). In effect, this change would increase the CT estate tax exemption in the very limited circumstance of an estate included 490 farmland but only to the current federal estate tax exemption level.

H.B. No. 6732 AN ACT CONCERNING THE APPEAL OF RESTRAINT AND DISPOSAL ORDERS ISSUED BY ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau opposes HB 6732. We are concerned with the change on line 7 Sec. 1(a) that would replace “which he” with “that the commissioner”. This change would dramatically change the ability for individuals to defend their animals under attack and does not reflect the real-time nature of such events. We urge defeat of this bill as we are not aware of instances that would warrant this change.