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January 27, 2015

TO: Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee

FROM: Susan Pronovost, Executive Director
Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association

RE: Nomination – Robert J. Klee, Commissioner of D.E.E.P.

My name is Susan Pronovost. I reside in Waterbury and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association. We appreciate this opportunity to offer brief comments regarding Governor Dannel P. Malloy's reappointment of Robert J. Klee as Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

By way of background, CGGA promotes the interests of the greenhouse industry which in Connecticut is largely comprised of family-owned small businesses that grow flowers, plants, and greenhouse crops. Connecticut does have several large, multi-million dollar greenhouse growers as well, who contribute heavily to the State of Connecticut through payroll taxes and the purchases of supplies, materials, goods and services. There are about 300 active greenhouse operations in Connecticut.

As agricultural producers, we are, by nature concerned as to the management of our precious resources and the acquisition and maintenance of open space. Commissioner Klee has an outstanding record in regards to open space acquisition and management, watershed protection and conservation standards. He has been a proponent of innovative programs for renewable energy that are at the forefront of greenhouse design and retrofit in Connecticut.

Commissioner Klee is the first DEEP Commissioner to reach out to our industry to facilitate healthy conversation about land and watershed management and challenges facing the agricultural industry. Dialogue has been broad-based on areas ranging from the effects of climate change on agriculture to regulatory issues. Commissioner Klee has personally been “on-farm” at some of our largest growers’ locations and at all times he has been attentive and concerned about the issues we’ve presented. Commissioner Klee understands that agricultural producers are partners in the conservation of our state’s land and water resources and it is only through healthy and productive dialogue that we can move forward together for the betterment of our environment and the preservation of our state’s resources.

To that end, we are pleased to offer these comments and respectfully, our endorsement of the reappointment of Robert J. Klee as Commissioner to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have and appreciate your consideration of our views.