



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

March 3, 2015

Testimony in opposition to:

**S.B. No. 984 AN ACT CONCERNING THE UNIONIZATION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS,
NONPARTISAN LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEES AND STATE EDUCATION
RESOURCE CENTER EMPLOYEES**

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 Gomes, Representative Tercyak and members of the Committee,

We are concerned that SB 984 would have a chilling effect on agricultural job creation in CT because it would inject a huge unknown to farm operations.

When we poll our farmer members the number one concern they have is labor. Finding and retaining good employees willing to do the hard and important work on our farms is sometimes difficult. Because of this most farms have had to pay high wages and offer expanded benefits. This has been true even during the recession our state is still struggling to recover from.

Because the CT farms are generally smaller than farms in other states we are different. Most agricultural workers in CT work with and alongside the farmers themselves. As a result farm owners and managers often experience the same working conditions as their workers.

A report published in 2011 by Farm Credit East (the primary farm lending institution in New England) showed that CT farmers do well by their workers. Currently we have the highest farm labor costs per \$100 of farm sales in all of New England and the Northeast. Connecticut's farm labor cost of \$27 per \$100 of sales is three times the national average and more than double that of Vermont.

The agricultural economy is especially important to our rural communities that often do not have opportunities for employment from other segments. As you are well aware from the experience in your own communities, over the past two decades Connecticut has lost many of its farms as the high cost of farming has taken its toll. However, we have found that agriculture can play an important role in the recovery and creation of many new jobs if we nurture that process.

We are also concerned that those interested in starting new farm operations in New England might pass CT by. Simply put, we do not believe that there has been a demonstrated need for this legislation. Please carefully consider the impact on CT agriculture and the workers they would employ when you act on this bill.