



**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 Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee,**

**Testimony relating to the Governor's Proposed FY201-2017 Biennial Budget.**

The Connecticut Farm Bureau is greatly concerned with the ability of the Department of Agriculture to carry out its duties and responsibilities moving forward in the next biennial budget cycle. Although the Governor's proposed budget for which you are conducting this hearing today seems to keep funding to the Department of Agriculture relatively unchanged it only tells part of the story.

A significant portion of the Department of Agriculture programs are funded through the Community Investment Act (CIA) which was formed in 2005 to provide dedicated funds to support worthwhile community-level investments across four sectors: Farmland Preservation/Agriculture, Open Space Conservation, Affordable Housing, and Historic Preservation. The CIA is funded through a \$40 surcharge on recording fees, which are distributed across those four sectors.

Next week the Finance, Revenue and bonding Committee will hear testimony on SB 946 AN ACT CONCERNING REVENUE ITEMS TO IMPLEMENT THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET. This bill calls diverting all funds derived from the CIA for the second half of FY 2016 and all of FY2017. This would have devastating effects on the agricultural sector. The Department of Agriculture programs currently funded through CIA are:

- Agricultural Sustainability Program (Dairy Support Program)
- Farmland Preservation program (including 5 staff positions)
- Ag Viability grant program
- Farm Transition grant program
- CT Grown program
- FarmLink
- Food Policy Council
- Seafood Advisory Council
- Wine Development Council

These cuts represent an effective cut to the Department of Agriculture of \$5,400,000 in FY 2016 and \$10,800,000 in FY2017. Although we will testify against the CIA cuts, we urge the Appropriations Committee to include these funds in the budget to make sure these important programs continue.

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