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Testimony for House Bill 5044, “An Act Making Adjustments To State Expenditures For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017 – Conservation & Development”

**Dustyn Nelson
Ellington, Connecticut**

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I am Dustyn Nelson, of Ellington, Connecticut. Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Vice Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the Appropriations Committee. I am here to speak against the budget cuts faced by The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. I currently serve as a director for the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association, a collaboration of over 1,700 businesses grossing more than \$800 million annually, and employing approximately 30,000 people. Agriculture is something that touches our daily lives, without it, we would be naked and hungry. While not all aspects of agriculture contribute to keeping us feed and clothed, all parts of the industry contribute to our standard of living. Many who analyze the economy utilize standard of living as an indicator of the economy.

I have chosen a career path in ornamental horticulture, in hopes of improving the standard of living for people through their interactions with plants. As the Business Development Coordinator for The Garden Barn Nursery in Vernon, Connecticut, I work to find new ways to connect with our customers and improve their standard of living with plants. In a technology driven world, it is my job to get them to put down their phones for just a moment, to stop and smell the roses.

The Experiment Station helps in making my job easier. Through their publications, I am able to provide accurate information to help contribute to the success of consumers in their gardens. When a consumer is successful in their garden they often continue to engage in that pastime, not only improving their standard of living but also contributing to a healthy environment.

The research conducted by the experiment station helps businesses, such as The Garden Barn control pest problems utilizing fewer pesticides, helping to protect the environment. The environment is a contributing factor to the standard of living, one that requires continual research. Out of everything we can pass along to our future generations, they at a minimum deserve a healthy planet.

As you can see, The Agricultural Experiment Station not only helps drive up the standard of living here in our state, but it also helps business contribute to our economy. My examples are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to contributions the experiment station has made that not only benefit the residents of Connecticut but the entire scientific community. Cuts to the experiment station would leave equipment that required large investments to be left unutilized and critical research undone. We owe it to the taxpayers and future generations to ensure that the station is fully maximized providing a great return on investment and is able to conduct research vital to our environment and food supply.

I also, urge support of the UConn Block Grant as UConn Extension and the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources provide support and innovation with regard to best management practices, plant breeding, pest control and risk management to growers statewide improving economic viability.