



**Connecticut Farm Bureau Association**  
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**Submitted by: Henry N. Talmage, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, a statewide nonprofit membership organization representing 5,000 farm families dedicated to the future of Connecticut agriculture.**

**Testimony relating to Governor's Bill No. 5044, AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING June 30, 2017**

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

The Connecticut Farm Bureau is greatly concerned about the ability of the Department of Agriculture to carry out its duties and responsibilities moving forward in FY2017 and beyond. The Governor's proposed budget adjustments for which you are conducting this hearing today represent the 5.75% reduction that all state agencies are being asked to absorb. It should be noted however that the Department of Agriculture not only withstood budget cuts that were instituted in FY2016 but most significantly lost approximately \$1,250,000 in FY16 and \$2,500,000 in FY17 because of diversions from the Community Investment Account (CIA). The programs funded by the Community Investment Act account for approximately 30% of the Department of Agriculture's budget; the net result is that the Department of Agriculture has suffered a disproportionate reduction in funding. The farming community depends heavily on the programs and services that the Department of Agriculture provides. Programs like the Agricultural Sustainability Program (Dairy Support Program), Farmland Preservation program, Ag Viability and Farm Transition grants, as well as all the marketing programs including the CT Grown program. In addition the Department is responsible for the licensing and inspection of dairy and shellfish and the associated public health protections. Many of the duties of the Department of Agriculture are mandated by statute. The Department of Agriculture has withstood a steady decline in the number of employees and resources while CT agriculture has continued to diversify and bring in new farmers (1,000 new farms from 2007 to 2012 according to the USDA Ag Census). These new farmers as well as existing farmers depend heavily on a strong Department of Agriculture.

The CT Farm Bureau is also greatly concerned with the cuts to the CT Agricultural Experiment Station. The cuts included in the Governor's mid-term budget adjustment total nearly \$800,000 and represent about 10% of the Stations' budget compared to the 5.75% reduction expected by other agencies. The Connecticut Ag Experiment Station is the oldest Agricultural Experiment Station in the nation and has an amazing history of ground-breaking discoveries and accomplishments in its 140 years of existence. Ongoing research on the development and field trials of new crops for Connecticut farmers such as hops used by local breweries are very important as farmers continue to find new crops and markets in this high cost of production state. The Experiment Station is also conducting timely and important research on honeybee and native pollinator health, an issue that is critical to the future of CT agriculture. The CT Agricultural Experiment Station also plays an important role in protecting public health with its work in food safety testing, control of mosquito and tick borne diseases including West Nile and Zika viruses as well as Lyme disease. If the proposed cuts take place, the Agricultural Experiment Station will be forced to lay off several PhD scientists and other critical staff that have been hired recently to fill open positions and conduct important research. These new scientists have secured federal grants totaling more than \$500,000 for their work that will be lost as well.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau wants you to know just how important both the Department of Agriculture and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station are to our members and the residents of Connecticut in general. We urge you to consider how disproportionate the cumulative cuts that these agencies have received are as well as their ability to withstand these additional cuts without drastically reducing their effectiveness.

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