



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 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.

Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis and members of the Environment Committee,

Raised Bill No. 5312, Raised Bill No. 5313, Raised Bill No. 145, Raised Bill No. 145, Raised Bill No. 140, Raised Bill No. 5317, Raised Bill No. 146

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports the Department of Agriculture Bills listed above as presented. In each case the bills represent important improvements to the statues that will clarify authority, improve operating efficiency and provide the Commissioner with the tools he needs to carry out of duties and responsibilities of the Department of Agriculture.

Raised Bill No. 41 AN ACT CONCERNING REVISION OF DIFINITIONAL, TIMING AND PROCEDURAL PROVISIONS OF THE INLAND WETLANDS AND WATERCOURSE ACT.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau opposes this bill because it calls for significant changes to the Inland Wetland statues that could have significant ramifications for CT Agriculture. It amends the definition of “Wetlands” to add a new soil type designation not previously covered. It also removes a provision that allows applicants to make an application to DEEP for review and action if the municipality fails to act according to the statute. This would likely lead to increased litigation between applicants and municipalities and be more costly and time consuming. The bill as presented would also remove the requirement for a public hearing for establishing and changing boundaries of inland wetland and watercourse areas. The Connecticut Farm Bureau believes that the Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Act is a key statute and changes to it have the potential to impact many farmer and timberland owners across the state. We believe that the provisions recommended in Raised Bill No. 41 should be fully presented to property owners and they ought to be given the opportunity to provide input before any changes to the law are considered.

Raised bill No. 138 AN ACT CONCERNING TH TERM AND FEE FOR CERTAIN LICENSES ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE DESIGNATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AS LEAD AGENCY FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE FOOD SAFTEY MODERNIZATION ACT.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports this bill. Section 1.through Section 4.of the bill provides the authority for the Department of Agriculture to change from annual license term to biennial license term with a corresponding two-year fee schedule. This change would allow the Department to streamline the administrative process to increase efficiency and reduce costs associated with license processing.

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The Connecticut Farm Bureau also support Section 5.of this bill because it establishes the CT Department of Agriculture as the lead agency for the purpose of the implementation, administration and enforcement of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). FSMA presents smaller-scale farmers of fruits and vegetables such as we have in Connecticut with significant and expensive challenges for implementation and on-going compliance. Many Connecticut farmers are apprehensive about the new requirements and we believe the CT Department of Agriculture is the state agency best equipped to work with the FDA and Connecticut farmers to establish compliance. The Department has a strong and established history of working with farmers and has expertise in the practices and procedures necessary for establishing the program as outlined by the FDA. In fact the Department has already implemented a first-in-the nation grant program to help farmers comply with FSMA through its existing Farm Transition Grant program. Therefore, the Connecticut Farm Bureau encourages adoption of Raised Bill No.138.