

Planning and Development Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB- 5534

Title: **AN ACT CONCERNING THE CLASSIFICATION OF FARM LAND.**

Vote Date: 3/26/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/19/2018

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning and Development Committee, Representative Craig Fishbein

REASONS FOR BILL:

Public Act 490 allows owners of farmland, forestland, and open space to be taxed at its "current use" value, rather than its highest and best use. However, some municipal tax assessors have been denying application of farm land classification on land that legally meets the criteria for farm land status. This bill clarifies such practices unlawful, as it formally prohibits assessors from intentionally assessing land incorrectly.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Chris Coppola: Mr. Coppola is the owner of Triple Bar C in Berlin, where they raise, train and sell horses. He has shared his experiences in being unfairly taxed by his town assessor, and the town upheld the initial assessment in appeals, causing Mr. Coppola to file suit against his town. He also explains that he loses business as other professional farm families move out of the state due to unjust taxation of their farmland.

Hugh & Sylvia Winchell: Mr. and Mrs. Winchell submitted testimony in support of this bill as their own small five-acre farm has been unreasonably assessed.

Julie Shepard: Provided testimony sharing her circumstances of wrongful taxation on her farm. On two of her properties there are designated lots, other than her house lot, that are

being taxed at the higher residential rate when they have been designated under PA 490 for many years.

Executive Direction Henry Talmage, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association: Mr.

Talmage extends his support of this proposal as it reinforces existing law requiring assessors from removing only the actual size of a home site from the eligible land in a PA 490 farmland application.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Taylor Hyde

Date: 4/4/18