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**February 23, 2018**

**Submitted by: Henry N. Talmage, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, a statewide nonprofit membership organization representing 4,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.**

**Senator Kennedy, Senator Miner, Representative Demicco, Senator Flexer, Senator Somers, Representative Gresko, Ranking Member Harding and members of the Environment Committee,**

**Testimony in support of:**

**Raised Bill No. 102**

The Connecticut Farm Bureau generally supports Raised Bill No. 102 AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURAL-RELATED STATUTES. This bill would make important technical changes to the Forest Practitioner certification and licensing requirements that are consistent with recommendations made by the CT DEEP Forest Practices Advisory Board and is also supported by the forest products industry. In Section 5, the bill also provides a mechanism to align state program titles with the federal farmland program titles and allows for subsequent program title changes. This change will allow CT to continue to take advantage of leveraged funds from the federal government for farmland preservation regardless of program title name changes. Finally we are somewhat concerned with the proposed language change in Section 7 that would change the impact threshold from “materially” to “permanently” for solar projects over 2 megawatts on prime farmland or core forest. The intent of the provision which was passed last session was to allow the Commissioners of Agriculture and DEEP to offer opinions on the impact of these projects on prime farmland and core forests. It would seem that by changing the threshold from “materially” to “permanently” it would make it harder to meet the threshold and thus appear less objectionable to develop large scale solar projects on prime farmland and core forests.

**Raised Bill No. 106**

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports Raised Bill No. 106 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALE OF “CONNECTICUT GROWN” PRODUCTS. This bill would establish a requirement that anyone who sells farm products as “Connecticut Grown” to school districts or educational institutions provide proof that the products were produced in Connecticut by providing farm-of-origin labeling. A similar requirement was passed for Certified Farmers Markets previously. CFBA supports this bill not only to protect against potential abuses by providers who might source product from outside CT and call it Connecticut Grown but also to promote a stronger connection between the educational institutions and local CT farmers.