To: Senator Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Dr. Theodore G. Andreadis, Director, The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

Date: February 22, 2019

I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony concerning the Governor’s FY 20-21 budget recommendations for The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. As a relatively small agency, we have always operated on a very lean budget and have only requested what we absolutely need. In fiscal year 2017, the Experiment Station’s budget was substantially cut by 12%. Since then we have struggled to meet our core mission for conducting world-class scientific research, providing important services to Connecticut businesses and residents and meeting our statutory regulatory responsibilities. These obligations have been partially achieved through elimination of one department, staff retirements, and increased acquisition of federal grants which now support the salaries of one-third of our scientific and technical staff and account for nearly forty percent of our operating budget. We currently have 9 vacant positions.

The Governor’s recommended budget for FY 20-21 is equally lean and will present similar challenges as it essentially maintains the status quo and does not restore prior holdbacks and recessions. Although this level of funding is less than optimal and below our agency request, we feel that pending any further reductions, we can meet our statutory functions, maintain most of our current research programs and provide the level of service that citizens and businesses in the State have come to expect from us with this budget.

We do greatly appreciate new funding to support one Laboratory Technician for the Industrial Hemp Program and look forward to working with Department of Agriculture to implement this new enterprise.

We have one additional request we would like to make that is urgently needed, and that is funding to support one of two vacant “Nursery Inspector” positions. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station has the regulatory responsibility for registering and inspecting over 400 nurseries and dealers annually per State Statue. Due to staff retirements, there are currently only two inspectors where previously there were four. The nursery industry in Connecticut is the state’s largest sector in agriculture and contributes more than $1 billion to Connecticut’s economy. All plant material exported from Connecticut must be inspected and certified by our nursery inspection team before it can be shipped. Last year more than 300 shipments of plant material were exported from Connecticut. This unit is struggling to meet its
statutory responsibilities of registering nurseries, inspection of plant material for pests and
disease, and the certification of shipments for export. The addition of another inspector would
greatly facilitate this important regulatory program.

For over 140 years, we have strived to achieve ground-breaking discoveries with an unbridled
commitment to public service as we have advanced the frontiers of knowledge to solve the
region’s most challenging problems and improve the quality of life for citizens across the state.
Thank you again for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to call on me if you have any
questions or require more information. Please feel free to e-mail me at
theodore.andreadis@ct.gov or contact me by phone at (203) 974-8440.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Theodore G. Andreadis, Ph.D.
Director