February 25, 2019

Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Susan Puglivesi and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association (“CGGA”). The CGGA represents the interests of some 200 family-owned greenhouse growers and farmers in the State of Connecticut.

I would like to take this opportunity to address HB 7148, “An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2021, and Making Appropriations Therefore”.

We are very appreciative of Governor Lamont’s financial support for the Community Investment Act, which provides tangible economic benefits through the implementation of Farmland Preservation, Farm Viability Grants that enable non-profits, municipalities, and agricultural cooperatives to develop community programming, vocational services, and agri-tourism programs, and Farm Transition Grants which empowers farmers to invest in new technologies to conserve resources and become more climate resilient, facilitate on-farm capital improvements, and assist farmers in adapting to changing consumer trends by helping to increase revenue and commerce through on-farm food production of value-added products.

We are concerned that the Community Investment Act funds have been removed from the budget of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and placed in the General Fund. That movement could potentially diminish the purview of those funding activities by the Commissioner of Agriculture or could jeopardize their existence if they are to remain in the General Fund.

We are pleased that new positions have been added to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture’s budget to provide the necessary regulatory authority and on-farm technical assistance needed to advance the new industrial hemp industry which has the potential to create new revenue pathways for our state’s agricultural producers.

We are also very grateful to Governor Lamont for his decision to fund the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program. This program is an invaluable tool to promote Connecticut agriculture in urban and rural areas for the most vulnerable members of our population – our elderly. Urban and rural dwellers alike benefit from this supplemental nutrition program which is very popular. Senior Farmers’ Market vouchers provide new markets for rural farmers into urban locations; thus, commerce is enhanced and a valuable connection between the consumer and the farmer is consummated.