



STEERING COMMITTEE

Joseph Bonelli
University of Connecticut

Bonnie Burr
University of Connecticut

Paul Elconin
Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust

Gordon Gibson
Connecticut State Grange

Eric Hammerling
CT Forest & Park Association

Bryan Hurlburt
CT Farm Bureau Association

Terry Jones
Jones Family Farms

Kip Kolesinskas
Manchester

Nathan L'Etoile
American Farmland Trust

Henry Lord
New Haven

Susan Mitchell
New CT Farmer Alliance

Elisabeth Moore
Connecticut Farmland Trust

Amy Paterson
CT Land Conservation Council

Shannon Raider-Ginsburg
CT NOFA

Richard Roberts
Halloran & Sage

Kathy Ruhf
Land for Good

Jim Smith
Cushman Farm

Keith Stechschulte
Farm Credit East

Shannon Yearwood
End Hunger CT!

STAFF

Chelsea Gazillo - Director
cgazillo@farmland.org

Armando Paolino - Lobbyist

Working Lands Alliance Policy Statement SB 598, SB 893, and HB 5481 Environment Committee Public Hearing February 28, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Demicco, Vice-Chairs Gresko and Kushner, Ranking Members Harding and Miner, and members of the Environment Committee:

The Working Lands Alliance appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony in support of the following bills:

- SB 598 An Act Concerning the Production of Hemp in Connecticut
- SB 893 An Act Concerning an Enforcement Plan for Hemp Production
- HB 5481 An Act Implementing the Legalization of Industrial Hemp

My name is Chelsea Gazillo and I am the Director of the Working Lands Alliance (WLA), a broad-based, statewide coalition dedicated to preserving Connecticut's farmland. WLA includes such organizations as American Farmland Trust, the CT State Grange, New CT Farmer Alliance, End Hunger CT!, CT Land Conservation Council, CT NOFA, and the CT Farm Bureau Association, among many others. As an Alliance, we care deeply both about saving Connecticut's farmland and ensuring a healthy agricultural sector and prosperous future for Connecticut's farmers. As such, the issue that this bill seeks to address has prompted a significant amount of discussion within our coalition.

Our alliance is committed to supporting efforts that will increase the profitability and viability of farms. In the budget the Governor released last week, we were pleased to see the Governor's strong commitment to creating a USDA-approved, state program for industrial hemp. We strongly support the Governor's investment in funding additional personnel to develop and regulate a hemp program at both the Department of Agriculture and the CT Agricultural Experiment Station. Generating new revenues for individual farms creates new market opportunities, increases the total acres of land that are in production, generates additional investments in equipment and labor, increase the agricultural services needed to maintain that land, and develops a hemp processing infrastructure.

The production of hemp has many environmental and economic benefits. As the state transitions towards a climate resilient future, hemp is a crop that will help lead the way. Hemp can be used as an alternative to many products that are detrimental to our environment such as non-organic cotton and many plastic



STEERING COMMITTEE

Joseph Bonelli
University of Connecticut

Bonnie Burr
University of Connecticut

Paul Elconin
Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust

Gordon Gibson
Connecticut State Grange

Eric Hammerling
CT Forest & Park Association

Bryan Hurlburt
CT Farm Bureau Association

Terry Jones
Jones Family Farms

Kip Kolesinkas
Manchester

Nathan L'Etoile
American Farmland Trust

Henry Lord
New Haven

Susan Mitchell
New CT Farmer Alliance

Elisabeth Moore
Connecticut Farmland Trust

Amy Paterson
CT Land Conservation Council

Shannon Raider-Ginsburg
CT NOFA

Richard Roberts
Halloran & Sage

Kathy Ruhf
Land for Good

Jim Smith
Cushman Farm

Keith Stechschulte
Farm Credit East

Shannon Yearwood
End Hunger CT!

STAFF

Chelsea Gazillo - Director
cgazillo@farmland.org

Armando Paolino - Lobbyist

products. Among the most salient environmental benefits of hemp is it grows in variety of climates and soil types which means this crop will do well on farms that have sub-prime soils. Additionally, it is naturally resistant to most pests, and grows in tight spaces allowing it to out compete most weeds. It can also be used as a natural substitute for cotton and wood fiber, hemp can be pulped using fewer chemicals than wood because its low lignin content.

If passed, these important bills will allow Connecticut to compete in a \$500 million-dollar industry (and growing) and make CT the 44th state to allow for hemp production in the country. Some U.S. farms are reporting revenue of \$90,000 per acre from the sale of Cannabidiol - CBD oil alone which makes hemp an enticing crop choice for farmer. As many CT farmers struggle to find new ways to remain viable, legalizing hemp production will allow them to compete in a lucrative market and, as mentioned earlier, increase the total number of acres of land that are in agricultural production within our state.

We strongly urge the committee to pass SB 598, SB 893, and HB 5481 as soon as possible and allow CT farmers to start reaping the extensive economic and environmental benefits of hemp production this growing season.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Gazillo
Working Lands Alliance Director