Bill No.: SB-233
AN ACT CONCERNING COTTAGE FOOD PRODUCTS AND THE PRODUCTION OF HONEY AND MAPLE SYRUP.

Vote Date: 2/25/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/4/2019
File No.: 47

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Paul Formica, 20th Dist.
Sen. Craig Miner, 30th Dist.
Sen. Catherine A. Osten, 19th Dist.

Rep. Doug Dubitsky, 47th Dist.
Rep. Kevin Ryan, 139th Dist.

Sen. Dan Champagne, 35th Dist.
Sen. Matt Lesser, 9th Dist.
Sen. Norman Needleman, 33rd Dist.


REASONS FOR BILL:

Currently, the Department of Consumer Protection, under Section 21a-62b of the Connecticut General Statutes, has purview over the production of honey and maple syrup. Producers of honey and maple syrup have shared concern that the productions of such products are regulated by the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) rather than the Department of Agriculture (DoAg), an agency that is better fit to oversee such production these goods which are often produced in farms. Testimony shared with the committee identified that other New England states have both products regulated by their respective Departments on Agriculture. Additionally, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration consider honey and maple syrup as low risk products.

Substitute Language – LCO No. 4708
Substitute language added sections 2 and 3 that state “The Department of Agriculture shall be responsible for the enforcement of the provision of this section” in sections 21a-24b and 21a-24 of the general statutes, respectively. Additionally, substitute language includes “the
production of honey” under Connecticut’s definition of “agriculture” and “farming” in subsection (q) of section 1-1 of the general statutes. Testimony shared by DCP, DoAg, and other advocates stated the intent of the original bill, for full oversight and regulatory authority of the production of honey and maple syrup by DoAg, would not be complete without changes to Title 21a and Title 22 of the general statutes. As originally drafted, the bill would only relate to honey and maple syrup produced in a home kitchen, i.e. “cottage food.”

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Melody Currey, Acting Commissioner, Department of Agriculture (DoAg):** Supports the bill. Although supportive of the intent of the bill, other jurisdictional changes in the statutes would be needed to give DoAg regulatory authority over the production of honey and maple syrup.

**Michelle Seagull, Commissioner, Department of Consumer Protection:** Provided comment on the bill. In order to achieve the intention of the bill proposal, additional statutory changes would be necessary in Title 21a and Title 22 of the general statutes.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Representative Tim Ackert, 8th Assembly District:** Shared personal testimony of relationship with sugar shacks and beekeepers. Maple and honey producers should be under the purview of the Department of Agriculture.

**John and Bonnie Hall, Maple Breeze Farm:** New England maple syrups are produced on small farm buildings and should be regulated by the Department of Agriculture. Shared personal testimony of the impact farmers will have when regulated by another agency.

**Mark J. Harran, President, Maple Syrup Producers Association of Connecticut (MSPAC):** Regulatory authority of maple production should be placed under the purview of DoAg because (1) maple syrup is inherently safe due to the nature of its production, (2) maple syrup is a boiled product, (3) the FDA views maple syrup as a low risk food, (4) MSPAC provides information to its members in regards to the safe production, packaging, and handling of maple syrup, (5) MSPAC has a history of working with DoAg, (6) maple syrup produced in Vermont is regulated by the state’s Department of Agriculture, and (7) MSPAC DCP does not have staff to support MSPAC’s growth efforts.

**Alan Holmberg:** Shared personal testimony as a full time honey farmer. The bill as drafted would only relate to honey that is produced in home kitchens. The bill should be amended to include any “on farm production,” such as, a separate Honey House on a beekeeper’s farm, or maple syrup produced in a sugarhouse.

**Bryan Hurlburt, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association (CFBA):** Although supportive of the bill, CFBA recommends language that states any and all regulation of maple syrup and honey be regulated by the Department of Agriculture. Other New England states have both products regulated by their Departments of Agriculture.
Susan Pronovost, Executive Director, Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association:
Food safety is a high priority with Connecticut Department of Agriculture. The department is
staffed with individuals who have received the latest training in farm food safety and should
be the lead regulating authority on all meters in agriculture.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Submitted.

Reported by: Pamela Bianca / Ussawin R. Bumpen       Date: 3/27/2019