To the Environment Committee and Co-chairs Cohen and Demicco,

I am writing on behalf of the CT State Grange, composed of rural and suburban communities across the state.

Please note that there was a robust discussion of bear hunting at the State Grange convention. The Grange has many members who are hunters and even some that have hunted bear.

Please note that hunters that have personally hunted bear OPPOSED this bill and there was near unanimous support for NOT hunting bears.

Bears are often baited with human food (doughnuts) – FURTHER attracting them to human food, which is the main cause of the nuisance bear problem. A secondary and more temporary cause is recent development and logging in the Simsbury/Avon area.

Bear hunting will create orphans and make more nuisance bears (bears learn foraging and den building and need those skills). Hunting will NOT address the problem – it risks making the nuisance bear problem WORSE.

Bears are intelligent and not aggressive. They are a keystone species and essential in the ecosystem. They are not overcrowded, and the number of calls has very little to do with the number of bears.

We need better education. We should consider FINES to ensure that people are not contributing to the problem of nuisance bears. This is what is needed most in towns with bear problems. People are moving in and think they should call, and in general are not smart. Some put food out hoping to see a bear. Being careless or purposefully attracting bears should be illegal!

The bear population is self-regulating based on habitat, food and social interactions. We need education, not hunting. Hunting will have significant unintended consequences.
For the record, I am personally not in favor of a bear preserve. This was not discussed by the CT State Grange, but it is very clear that people are the problem, not bears.

In sum, the CT State Grange OPPOSES SB 586.

Respectfully,

Susan Masino
41 Madison Lane
West Simsbury

CT State Grange Legislative Committee
Simsbury Grange #197