Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee;

I am a Connecticut apple grower with a small orchard in Enfield and I am also the current Chairman of the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board. I would like to express my thoughts on the change being proposed to the legislation regarding the Connecticut Apple Marketing Order.

The Apple Marketing Order was proposed by growers and legislated in the late 1980's to place a small assessment on apples produced throughout the state to be used for the generic marketing of Connecticut apples. When the Order was conceived there was a strong wholesale market in Connecticut with a small but growing direct-market segment.

In the earlier years of the Order, promotional efforts were divided between promotions to wholesale buyers and promotions to the general public. This was accomplished through print advertising to the general public and in-store promotions to the wholesale market. Over the past two decades the apple market has changed and the apple growers have changed with that market. Direct marketing is now a part of every orchard, indeed it is the major part of most orchards. There are more smaller orchards throughout the state and fewer wholesale producers. The internet and social media are now the predominant forms of promotion for direct marketers.

The Apple Marketing Board has evolved its approach to promotion to reflect these changes. In order to represent 100% of the apple growers in Connecticut, funds now go exclusively towards promoting the retail market for our apples. The majority of those funds are spent on social media promotions. This approach to promotion creates an even distribution of the Orders funds for all of the apple producers in Connecticut.

Because of market changes the Board no longer directs funds towards the wholesale market. The few growers involved in these markets have established relationships with their buyers. These same growers do benefit from the funds spent on retail promotions because they all pursue some level of retail at their orchards.

The proposed change to the legislation would maintain the 1000 bushel assessment exemption in order to shield the smaller growers. To reflect the even distribution of our promotional efforts for all apple growers in the state, the change would establish a minimum $100 fee for all grower's of 1000 bushels or more. Above 1000 bushels, larger growers would still be paying a per bushel assessment. I believe this will result in a more equitable assessment of funds and reflect the changed nature of the apple promotions funded by the Order.

Respectfully yours,
Brian Kelliher