



Ellie Angerame
New CT Farmer Alliance

Joseph Bonelli
University of Connecticut

Bonnie Burr
University of Connecticut

Dina Brewster
CT NOFA

Paul Elconin
Northwest Connecticut Land
Conservancy

Amanda Freund
Freund's Farm
CowPots

Gordon Gibson
Connecticut State Grange

Eric Hammerling
CT Forest & Park Association

Terry Jones
Jones Family Farms

Kip Kolesinskas
Manchester

Nathan L'Etoile
American Farmland Trust

Elisabeth Moore
Connecticut Farmland Trust

Joan Nichols
CT Farm Bureau Association

Will O'Meara
Land for Good

Amy Paterson
CT Land Conservation Council

Richard Roberts
Halloran & Sage

Jim Smith
Cushman Farm

Latha Swamy
City of New Haven Food System
Policy Division

Keith Stechsulte
Farm Credit East

STAFF

Chelsea Gazillo - Director
cgazillo@farmland.org

Armando Paolino - Lobbyist

Working Lands Alliance Policy Statement HB 6439 Appropriation Committee Public Hearing February 19, 2021

Dear Co-Chairs Osten and Walker; Vice-Chairs Hartley, Dathan, and Nolan;
Ranking Members Miner and France, and members of the Appropriations
Committee:

The Working Lands Alliance appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony **in support** of Governor Lamont's budget proposal for Fiscal Years 2022-2023 concerning the CT Department of Agriculture.

My name is Chelsea Gazillo, and I am American Farmland Trust's New England Policy Director and lead the Working Lands Alliance (WLA), a broad-based, statewide coalition dedicated to preserving Connecticut's farmland. WLA includes farmers and such organizations as CT Farmland Trust, the CT State Grange, New CT Farmer Alliance, City of New Haven Food Policy Division, CT Land Conservation Council, and the CT Farm Bureau Association, among many others. As an Alliance, we care deeply about saving Connecticut's farmland and ensuring a healthy agricultural sector and a prosperous future for Connecticut's farmers.

Governor Ned Lamont's proposed budget addresses several of WLA's 2021 policy priorities and makes a strong investment in promoting a healthy agricultural sector for all of Connecticut's residents. WLA was pleased to see the Governor has continued to fund and invest in the Department of Agriculture. A stand-alone Department of Agriculture remains one of the Working Lands Alliance's top priorities. The Department is a crucial component to continuing a strong and diverse agricultural sector, providing regulatory oversight, and guidance to farmers and agricultural service providers. The agency's consistent funding reinforces the administration and state's commitment to Connecticut's agricultural sector.

WLA offers the following comments on other areas related to our policy priorities in the proposed budget:

- *Dairy Farm – Agriculture Sustainability Account* – The Governors continued commitment to our struggling dairy industry. This vital funding will help offset the higher production cost and any future market disruptions to the dairy industry.
- *WIC Coupon Program for Fresh Produce* – Support



- *CAES increase in Funding and Personnel – Support*

Ellie Angerame
New CT Farmer Alliance

Joseph Bonelli
University of Connecticut

Bonnie Burr
University of Connecticut

Dina Brewster
CT NOFA

Paul Elconin
Northwest Connecticut Land
Conservancy

Amanda Freund
Freund's Farm
CowPots

Gordon Gibson
Connecticut State Grange

Eric Hammerling
CT Forest & Park Association

Terry Jones
Jones Family Farms

Kip Kolesinskas
Manchester

Nathan L'Etoile
American Farmland Trust

Elisabeth Moore
Connecticut Farmland Trust

Joan Nichols
CT Farm Bureau Association

Will O'Meara
Land for Good

Amy Paterson
CT Land Conservation Council

Richard Roberts
Halloran & Sage

Jim Smith
Cushman Farm

Latha Swamy
City of New Haven Food System
Policy Division

Keith Stechschulte
Farm Credit East

STAFF

Chelsea Gazillo - Director
cgazillo@farmland.org

Armando Paolino - Lobbyist

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Governor's budget. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Gazillo
Working Lands Alliance