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March 4, 2021

Dear Senator Cohen, Representative Borer, and members of the Environment Committee,

I ask for your support of HB 6441 which provides municipalities with much needed tools to help address our changing climate and the consequences that have and will continue to unfold. This follows the recommendations of the Governor's Council on Climate Change.

Section 3 of the bill contains a small but critical option that provides municipalities with the ability to establish a buyer's conveyance fee to fund land stewardship, climate resilience, and other environmental projects. Particularly of importance to me as a farmer is the permanent protection of farmland and the subsequent support for the farmers who farm that land.

In my town of Columbia, where I recently purchased a farm property, we could use these funds to support projects that preserve one of our most valuable resources, high quality soil for farming. The farm property that I now own with an investment group will only become more affordable to me as a full-time working farmer, when there is a conservation easement placed on the property. The program that we aim to utilize to do this work is the Community Farms Program at the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg). Currently this program requires individual municipalities to partially pay for these types of easements, in addition funds provided by the farmland preservation department at DoAg. This program prioritizes **food production**, which I believe is desperately needed, particularly as relates to a changing climate with more irregular weather patterns and more voracious storms, which we have seen cut power to various parts of the country for days at a time, including here in Connecticut. The larger state farmland preservation program does not prioritize food production, so we need to encourage the use of the Community Farms Programs at a much greater rate than it has been utilized. I believe that this bill can play a part in that.

Adoption of the program by towns is optional, and it costs the state nothing.

Please support HB 6441 and give our community the opportunity to decide whether to establish this funding program.

Sincerely,

Susan Mitchell  
Cloverleigh Farm  
Owner/Operator