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Submitted by Joan Nichols, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

Testimony in support of, with comment, on HB 6441 AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION.

Senator Cohen, Representative Gesko, Senator Slap, Representative Palm, and Members of the Environment Committee

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association supports Sections 3 and 19 of HB 6441. We would like to express our concern over Section 1 of this bill related to the provision of fees associated with the adoption of a municipal stormwater authority.

We support Section 3 of this bill to provide a local funding option to be used for the purchase, protection, or stewardship of farmland. Permanently protecting working farmland is critical to maintaining and expanding our local food supply both in rural and urban communities. Working farmland contributes to open space, clean air, water quality and wildlife habitat all while mitigating the impact of climate change. Permanent agricultural easements are often funded through a variety of sources including the state of Connecticut, US Department of Agriculture, local land trusts and municipalities. Providing this funding source for municipalities will help accelerate efforts to protect our working farmland.

We support Section 19 of this bill that would authorize the Connecticut Green Bank to establish an Environmental Infrastructure Fund. This funding source would help farmers invest in farm equipment, farm practices, on-farm energy projects and innovative technology to minimize the impact of climate change on their operations and the environment.

CFBA is concerned about the imposition of fees in Section 1 of this bill. Farms that are engaged in the sizable expansion of infrastructure may be required to apply for and be permitted through Connecticut DEEP. CFBA is concerned about the potential duplicity of permitting and fees that may be imposed on farms by both the state and now municipal level as proposed in this bill. The regulatory climate for farm family businesses can be challenging and expensive. We need to seek ways to encourage farm businesses while diminishing the burden of permitting fees and processes.

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association (CFBA) is a non-profit membership organization representing nearly 2,500 farming families in the state of Connecticut.