



# CONNECTICUT

## RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

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### ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING - March 3, 2021

#### Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 6496: An Act Concerning Certain Soil-Health Initiatives

Members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 6496. Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development is a 501 (C) 3 nonprofit organization that has been in operation since 1968, cultivating a diverse, equitable and resilient Connecticut through partnership-driven solutions to enhance natural resource conservation, agriculture, and rural economies.

For many years CT RC&D has hosted the CT Soil Health Initiative in partnership with USDA NRCS, by delivering education and support to agricultural producers and a variety of federal, state, and nonprofit staff through workshops, conferences, pilot programs, equipment sharing, and hands on learning for the implementation of healthy soils in Connecticut.

By definition USDA defines soil health as the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem to support plants, animals, and humans. Land where soil health systems are implemented, such as no-till, cover cropping, or crop rotation have demonstrated positive results by increasing the soil's organic matter and improving microbial activity, sequestering more carbon, increasing water infiltration, improving wildlife and pollinator habitats, harvesting better profits and often better yields, reducing labor, fertilizer, and energy costs. Increasing Soil Health will help CT achieve many of its policy and environmental goals.

CT RC&D staff participated in the Agriculture/Soils Working group of the Governor's Council on Climate Change and sits on the Working Lands Alliance, CT Council on Soil & Water Conservation as well as its Soil Health Committee. CT RC&D supports language in this bill that includes Soil Health within the sections of HB 6496.

While including the language Soil Health is a good first step, CT RC&D would go even further to urge the Committee to consider other ways of showing that Connecticut values Soil Health. Moving forward recommendations that were reported within the GC3 report and consideration of a stand-alone Soil Health Program within the state that multiple agencies, and organizations could help implement would be some ways. This would ensure that technical assistance, incentives and funds get into the hands of farmers who are either currently or would like to be able to successfully implement Soil Health practices. Farmers play an important role in sequestering carbon and they often need support to access equipment and measures beyond what is currently available to them. Other examples of leveraging private dollars would be to consider a carbon credit program allowing farms to be compensated for the work they do and allowing them to be innovative while contributing to the greater good of CT both from an environmental and health stand point.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

John Guskowski, CT RC&D Board President

Jeanne Davies, CT RC&D Executive Director