

ECHO FARM



1051 Route 169
Woodstock CT 06281
16 March 2021

Dear Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and Members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony supporting **HB 6621, specifically section 3 establishing a CT Grown for CT Kids grants program**. My name is Robert Chang and I am the owner and operator of Echo Farm in Woodstock CT. We grow certified organic vegetables and cut flowers for sale at our farm stand, farmers markets, restaurants and hopefully soon, local school districts.

The CT Grown for CT Kids program will strengthen the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care sites. Funding from CT Grown for CT Kids can support food-insecure students with healthy, local food, educational experiences for students through STEM and nutrition curriculum, mental well-being of students by bolstering resilience, and providing social emotional support, and school districts as well as early childhood providers in cultivating relationships with local farmers to purchase, promote, and serve CT Grown food.

As a local farmer, I'm always seeking new local markets for my products, and I'm excited that CT Farm To School helps farmers sell to local school districts. But I'm also aware of the importance of school lunch programs which can provide the healthiest and most nutritious meal of the day for students who suffer from food insecurity. I know CT farmers have the capacity to deliver high quality produce to schools, and all CT children deserve a healthy, nutritious lunch at school. With the funding for a CT Grown for CT Kids program, schools can change meal programs to incorporate more locally farmed produce and even offer students learning and enrichment activities that reconnect them with CT farms. For these reasons, I wholeheartedly support this effort to facilitate cooperation between local farms and schools.

I ask this committee to support HB 6621 and the new CT Grown for CT Kids grants program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Chang', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Chang