

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

My name is Cristina Connolly, and I am a resident of Manchester, CT. I am writing to request your support for **HB 6621, specifically section 3 establishing a CT Grown for CT Kids grants program.**

The CT Grown for CT Kids strengthens 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.

This program is important to me because there are clear benefits to encouraging farm to school programs throughout the state. We know that students eat healthier and develop more of an interest in fruits and vegetables when they participate in farm to school programs and school gardens. This is even more of an issue after the impact of Covid on food security for low-income children. We know that farm to school programs support the small farmers that are an important part of Connecticut agriculture. We also know that more money stays in the local economy when schools purchase produce grown locally. I'm concerned that children in Hartford County are often eating unhealthy and processed food in school when we live in a state with so many local food opportunities and I think it is important that our legislature lead the way when it comes to improving linkages between youth, school systems and our local producers.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

CRISTINA CONNOLLY

Cristina Connolly
Manchester, Ct