



COMMON GROUND

HIGH SCHOOL, URBAN FARM, AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

March 15th, 2021

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

My name is Deborah Greig. I am the Farm Director at Common Ground in New Haven, 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.

As a farmer who works at a non profit including a charter school and programs that involve visiting field trips from local public schools, and our "Schoolyards" program that supports teachers with professional development and creation of school garden spaces, I have personally witnessed the impact that supporting young people's experiences learning in the outdoors, and making connections to the food they eat directly. I work mostly with our high schoolers, and frequently hear from new freshman how they remember visiting our farm when they were younger or having an impactful experience cooking or growing food in their elementary and middle school days. They remember a fresh cherry tomato from when they were 9 years old! That is an impact that can support healthy eating habits, students minds and bodies and local farms. Common Ground would be incredibly grateful to support the local schools that we visit to create and expand programs that truly inhabit the CT Farm to School experience.

We know that students have been impacted by Covid 19, many are stuck at home, disconnected from fellow students and educators. The potential for outdoor learning, and creative learning opportunities enabled by this funding could greatly serve to reconnect students, open up new passions around food and help them to connect to each other in ways that they have been missing since March. We are currently using opportunities on our farm to re engage disconnected students, pairing them with academic support, and it is working.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

Deborah Greig

Farm Director at Common Ground HS/New Haven Ecology Project
New Haven, CT

