



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

My name is Alexander Leigh. I am the District Chef for Brigaid in New London. 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 extremely important to me because it will connect students to the nourishment of their bodies. Through this bill you will be bridging the gap for our youth to help us educate them on the importance of how proper nutrition can have long lasting effect on their health. Connecting students to farms to understand how things are grown and eventually make it to their plates will guide them to make healthier food choices later into adulthood.

In some communities' students are not exposed to fresh fruits or vegetables and do not have access to farms in any way. This bill will give community partners, schools, and educators the funding to help create/support that access giving them the proper tools to continue this education of food. To see our youth, make better choices that will have long term health effects is amazing. Being a part of helping connect students to farms and teaching them of the importance this connection is something we all should advocate for.

With the Covid-19 pandemic occurring, we have lost the physical connection to the access of gardens, farms, in-person lessons, and even nutritious food options. Our youth have been forced to choose alternatives out of ease and accessibility. We cannot allow these situations to be a reason to hinder the importance of this education and connection with our youth.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

**Alexander F. Leigh, Mystic, CT**