



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

My name is Lisa Lenskold. I am the Co Founder of Norwalk Grows, School Garden Partnership in Norwalk. I also serve as the Co Education Action Team Leader for CT Farm to School Collaborative. 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 CT Farm to School can support students and schools in many facets of their educational and personal experiences. Through my years of experience working and directing school garden programs, school gardens are a very cost effective way to connect students to their food and how it's grown. Students are more apt to try new foods if they have grown it themselves and school gardens can extend the classroom into the outdoors, where the spread of COVID-19 is reduced. This is the perfect time to expand the Farm to School experiences and funding available for CT school districts. Additional funding for Farm to School in Norwalk, CT will allow us to grow our Farm to School programs beyond the one school that is currently participating. In our first year of Farm to School at Tracey Magnet School, we have leveraged our FoodCorps Service Member to teach Farm to School as a regular rotating class to all students this year during COVID. We have also connected to our wider school community to our Farm to School program by sending home Grow Kits with each of the students so they can grow at home and in the school garden this spring. Additional Farm to School Funding through this program will allow us to build this program throughout Norwalk.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

**Lisa Lenskold**

**Live in Wilton, Work in Norwalk**