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March 8, 2021
Connecticut Joint Committee on the Environment
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Testimony in Support of Amending SB 884 to Include Climate-Friendly Food Procurement Language

Dear Co-Chair Cohen, Co-Chair Borer, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Mercy for Animals, a nonprofit organization with approximately 2,000 Connecticut-based supporters dedicated to constructing a more compassionate food system for all, commends the Committee for its consideration of SB 884 and asks that it be amended to include the climate-friendly food procurement language that this Committee originally considered as HB 5030, sponsored by Representative Michel.

Adopting a Climate-Friendly Food Procurement Policy would position Connecticut as a leader in greenhouse gas emissions reduction by expanding the measurement of emissions beyond the transportation sector to include those associated with food procured by the State, and establishing science-based reduction targets accordingly. This policy would signal to constituents and the rest of the country that Connecticut is a leader in climate change mitigation strategies. Notably, similar bills have been introduced this session in New York and Washington, D.C.^{1 2} **We strongly urge the Committee to amend SB 884 to include climate-friendly food procurement language - language this Committee originally considered as HB 5030.**

Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Industrial Agriculture

In 2006, the U.N. warned in a landmark report that industrial livestock farming was one of the “most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global” and urged the world to take this problem seriously.³ A 2014 study illustrated that through our diets alone—largely because they are characterized by high levels of animal products—we will exceed the Paris Agreement target to limit the global rise in temperature to “well below 2°C.”⁴ More recently, a study found that food system activities, including the production, transport, and disposal of food, account for nearly 30 percent of all global greenhouse gas emissions, and that products derived from large cattle are particularly emissions-intensive.⁵

¹ New York S 3407, 2021. Retrieved from <https://s3.amazonaws.com/fh-document-service/file-by-sha384/f462e9e05494f5d6ea052d30f0740c5ba24c9bb6ff245a02a3dbf0b9bdf5dcc4a5c16b9e0d32f0da4d0aca04b06233dd>

² Washington, D.C. B 24-0018, Retrieved from <https://app.fiscalnote.com/bills/11889809>

³ Henning Steinfeld et al., *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2006), xx.

⁴ Bojana Bajželj et al., “Importance of Food-Demand Management for Climate Mitigation,” *Nature Climate Change* 4 (2014): 924–929.

⁵ United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition, *Sustainable Diets for Healthy People and a Healthy Planet*. Retrieved from <https://www.unscn.org/uploads/web/news/document/Climate-Nutrition-Paper-EN-WEB.pdf>

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More climate-friendly diets have also been linked to increased public health. A 2018 study compared omnivorous diets to Mediterranean, pescatarian, and vegetarian diets, and found a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as well as a decrease in disease risk.⁶ The latest data from the Center for Disease Control shows that cardiovascular disease was the leading cause of death in Connecticut in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.⁷ Plant-forward diets have been directly linked to a reduction in heart disease.⁸

Enactment of a Climate-Friendly Food Procurement Policy would also save valuable tax dollars. The Oakland Unified School District is a powerful example of such savings: a shift to less greenhouse gas intensive foods saved \$42,000 taxpayer dollars over the course of two years, in addition to decreasing the district's carbon footprint by 14 percent and its water footprint by 6 percent.⁹

Alignment with Existing Policy

Connecticut has an opportunity to go beyond the transportation sector emissions reductions outlined in SB 884, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the enactment of a Climate-Friendly Food Policy. SB 884 provides that the program may engage with “communities that are overburdened by air pollution” and fund the “assessment and planning of measures to reduce emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change.” As explained above, emissions associated with industrial animal agriculture are responsible for a large percentage of greenhouse gas emissions, and the associations between living near industrial farms and increased respiratory diseases such as asthma and bronchitis also cannot be overlooked.¹⁰ Adopting a Climate-Friendly Food Policy will enable the State to assess and plan for reducing emissions and mitigating the impacts of climate change at an even faster rate and in a more efficient manner, while also contributing to the air pollution reduction goals outlined in SB 884’s current language.

A Climate-Friendly Food Procurement Policy aligns with Connecticut’s Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Program, which promotes sustainability through the procurement of products that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health, the environment and society when compared with competing products serving a similar purpose. While the EPP Program focuses largely on electric, building, and transportation, this language gives Connecticut the opportunity to expand those considerations to the agricultural sector to further greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Life-Cycle Emissions Assessment

⁶ Burlingame, Barbara and Dernini, Sandro. *Sustainable Diets: Linking Nutrition and Food Systems*. Boston, MA: CABI, 2018.

⁷ Centers for Disease Control. “Stats of the State of Connecticut.” Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/connecticut/connecticut.htm>

⁸ Harvard Health Publishing. “The Right Plant-Based Diet for you.” Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-right-plant-based-diet-for-you>

⁹ Hamerschlang, Kari and Kraus-Pole, Julian, 2017. *Shrinking the Carbon and Water Footprint of School Food: A Recipe for Combatting Climate Change*. Retrieved from: http://1bps6437gg8c169i0y1drtgz-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/webiva_fs_2/FOE_FoodPrintReport_7F.pdf

¹⁰ Hindawi Geography Journal, *Distribution of Industrial Farms in the United States and Socioeconomic, Health, and Environmental Characteristics of Counties*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/geography/2013/385893/>.



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The adoption of climate-friendly food procurement language lends itself to a life-cycle assessment, also known as a consumption-based assessment, of Connecticut's greenhouse gas emissions associated with food procurement. A life-cycle assessment examines the emissions associated with goods produced outside of state or local boundaries for consumption within the state or locality (also known as "scope 3 emissions").¹¹ Specifically, a life-cycle assessment accounts for the production of food as well as post-production activities such as transport, refrigeration, and waste disposal. (Production includes inputs, such as fertilizer, manure, and pesticides, land use change, and farming.) This approach is comprehensive and offers more opportunities for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Overwhelming Support for a Climate-Friendly Food Procurement Policy

The Climate-Friendly Food Procurement Policy outlined in HB 5030 has support from a number of local and national organizations, including the Greater Hartford Environmental Coalition, Healthy Food in Health Care, CT Votes For Animals, Center for Biological Diversity, and 18 other organizations. By focusing on emissions associated with the life-cycle of food, Connecticut can realize the environmental, health, and economic benefits of addressing food procurement. **As such, Mercy For Animals strongly urges the Committee to amend SB 884 to include climate-friendly food procurement language - language this Committee originally considered as HB 5030.**

Sincerely,
Mercy For Animals

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Encl.

¹¹ Greenhouse Gas Protocol, "Frequently Asked Questions" Retrieved from https://ghgprotocol.org/sites/default/files/standards_supporting/FAQ.pdf