

# Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6842

AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LOCAL FOOD FOR  
SCHOOLS INCENTIVE PROGRAM AND EXPANSION OF THE CT GROWN

**Title:** FOR CT KIDS GRANT PROGRAM.

**Vote Date:** 3/10/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

**PH Date:** 3/8/2023

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Education Committee

Rep. Hector Arzeno, 151st Dist.  
Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st Dist.  
Rep. Jaime S. Foster, 57th Dist.  
Rep. Gregory Haddad, 54th Dist.  
Rep. Dominique Johnson, 143rd Dist.  
Rep. Robert Sanchez, 25th Dist.  
Rep. Tony J Scott, 112th Dist.  
Sen. Norman Needleman, 33rd Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill incentivizes schools to provide fresh produce for students by reimbursing Boards of Education who buy locally sourced food. The bill also grants more funding for the CT Grown for CT Kids program. The CT Grown for CT Kids program helps provide fresh food to CT students. Providing more funding would allow this program to extend its reach and impact more Connecticut students.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:**

The substitute language for this bill makes minor technical changes, extends the Section 1 reporting date, adds an additional State Department of Education (SDE) employee to administer the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program, and increases the appropriation for the program.

## RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

### **Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg), Commissioner, Bryan Hurlburt:**

supports this bill, stating that there is a high demand across Connecticut for more produce in school cafeterias. They state that since the inception of the CT Grown for CT Kids program, applications for funding have increased year.

### **State Department of Education (SDE), Commissioner, Charlene M. Russell-Tucker:**

supports this bill but notes that none of the funds pledged to the CT Grown for CT Kids program are reflected in the Governor's biennial budget.

## NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**The following food services directors submitted testimony in support of this bill.** They state that extra funding to buy more local produce would allow them to offer more diverse and higher quality foods to their students. The directors share personal examples of how offering high quality local produce has had a positive impact on their students. They state that, without extra funding, they would be forced to buy cheaper and lower quality commercial products.

East Hampton Public Schools, Nutrition Coordinator, Jennifer Bove

Hartford Public Schools, Senior Director of Food Services, Lonnie Burt

New Haven Public Schools, Food Service Director, Gail Cairns-Sharry

Regional School District #10, Director of Nutrition Services, Margaret Dreher

Milford Public Schools, Director of Food Services, Eileen Faustich

Common Ground High School, Farm Director, Deborah Greig

Tolland Public Schools, Director of Food & Nutrition Services, Abby Kassman-Harned

Old Saybrook Public Schools, Director of Food Services, Maureen Nuzzo

Norwich Public Schools, Food Service Director, Erin Perpetua

EdAdvance, Food Service Director, Becky Tyrrell

**Green Village Initiative, Executive Director, Ellie Angerame:** supports this bill, stating that it would be an opportunity to improve the quality of life for marginalized students. They state that increasing funding to buy fresh produce is a great way to provide a nutritious lunch to students who have inadequate access to high quality food.

**Hartford School Garden Council, Co-Chairs, Valerie Bryan & Alice Gold:** supports this bill, stating that increasing funding for buying local produce can provide students with STEM educational opportunities.

**Foodcorps, Northeast Regional Policy Director, Dawn Crayco:** supports this bill, stating that it provides schools an opportunity to offer students high quality food. They state that their organization has found that most school administrators want to offer their student nutritious local produce, but the high costs of fresh food are too restrictive.

**The Foodshed Network, Founder, Ali Ghiorse:** supports this bill, stating that introducing students to a variety of produce will help them form healthy eating habits.

**ConnCAN, Executive Director, Subira Gordon:** supports this bill, stating that it would bring equity to Connecticut's educational food services. They state that consuming high-quality food is important for healthy childhood development, and that this bill will go a long way towards ensuring fresh produce is available for all of Connecticut's students.

**Yellow Farmhouse Education Center, Director of Outreach, Laura Jackson:** supports this bill, stating that buying fresh produce provides schools with educational opportunities. They provide examples of how interacting with fresh produce and farming can teach kids about science and nutrition.

**Working Lands Alliance, Policy Associate, Robin Kerber:** supports this bill, stating that more funds will allow the successful CT Grown for CT Kids program to reach more of Connecticut's students. They state that focusing on providing fresh produce is a great investment, as it both strengthens the development of Connecticut's students and boosts the local economy.

**Norwalk Grows, Director, Lisa Lenskold:** supports this bill, stating that promoting fresh produce and gardening in schools is a great way to promote cultural awareness and strengthen a community.

**New Britain ROOTS, Executive Director, Joey Listro:** supports this bill, stating that it provides urban students a great opportunity to both learn more about agriculture and consume healthier food. They provide personal examples of how his organization has taught New Britain students about the natural world with the use of gardening and fresh produce.

**Cloverleigh Farm, Owner, Susan Mitchell:** supports this bill, stating that there is high enthusiasm among Connecticut farmers to be involved with the CT Grown for CT Kids program. They state that having more school districts buy fresh produce would provide a great opportunity for Connecticut farmers to grow their business.

**Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, Executive Director, Joan Nichols:** supports this bill, stating that it would generate business for Connecticut farmers. They state this bill would strengthen the relationship between schools and farmers.

**End Hunger Connecticut!, Policy Director, Lucy Nolan:** supports this bill, stating that more funding would make the CT Grown for CT Kids program more sustainable. They stated that demand for the CT Grown for CT Kids program is much higher than the program can currently address, and that more funding will allow more municipalities to participate.

**Cold Springs Farm, Owner, Jessica Stone:** supports this bill, stating that it will provide a reliable source of income to farmers. They state that the increase in demand for fresh produce would make farm ownership much more sustainable.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENT:**

**76<sup>th</sup> District, State Representative, John Piscopo:** suggests that the committee add language to the bill requiring schools post nutritional information about their lunch menu in the cafeteria. They state that this will allow students to make better decisions about what food they consume.

**Reported by: Sam Gilberti**

**Date: 3/27/2023**