



Connecticut State Grange

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT STATE GRANGE IN SUPPORT OF COMMITTEE BILL NO. 5202, AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS FOR FARMLAND PRESERVATION

I am Gordon Gibson of Vernon, Vice Chair of the Board of Directors and Legislative Liaison for the Connecticut State Grange. I am speaking today in support of Committee Bill 5202, An Act Authorizing the Issuance of Bonds for Farmland Preservation.

Connecticut's agriculture industry is big business, providing approximately 20,000 full time jobs and contributing \$3.5 billion annually to Connecticut's economy. Unlike other industries, farming depends on having the land base on which to operate. Factories and offices can be converted from one business to another, but once land is developed it is lost to agriculture forever. Thirty years ago the State launched a program to permanently preserve 130,000 acres of prime farmland. To date slightly more than 37,000 acres have been preserved. However, there remains only \$5 million in unallocated bond authorizations. The pace of Connecticut's farmland preservation program has increased in recent years, due in part to funds made available through the Community Investment Act (P.A. 05-228) and the leveraging of state funds to secure federal funds, but without an additional bond authorization the State's farmland preservation program will not be able to maintain its current pace when the remaining bond funds are expended late this summer.

Although more and more people are seeking locally grown food products, Connecticut is currently a net food importing state. On average, our food travels approximately 1,500 miles from farm to table, mostly by rail or trucks. As the price of diesel fuel rises the cost of transporting our food increases and this increase is ultimately passed along to the retail consumer in the form of higher prices at the grocery store. While Connecticut may never become a net food exporting state, we need to preserve our remaining farmland to feed our residents at all economic levels.

The Connecticut State Grange and its nearly 4,000 members thank the Environment Committee for introducing bill 5202 to help preserve our diminishing farmland base throughout Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

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