Legislative History for Connecticut Act

Act Number:	PA 04–189	
Bill Number:	5585	
Senate Pages:	3205, 3373-3374	**3**
House Pages:	3756-3769	**14**
Committee:	Environment: 648-651, 660-661, 664-666, 676-680, 685-694, 696-697, 699, 701, 703-706, 708-710, 712, 713, 734, 750-771	**59**

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Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public Hearing(s) and/or Senate and House of Representatives Proceedings

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CONNECTICUT

GEN. ASSEMBLY

SENATE

PROCEEDINGS

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PART 11

3196-3432

Without objection, so ordered.

SEN. LOONEY:

Calendar Page 12, Calendar 537 should be marked PR.

Calendar 538, H.B. 5601, Madam President, move to place this item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SEN. LOONEY:

Calendar 539, H.B. 5608, Madam President, would move this item to the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SEN. LOONEY:

Calendar 540, H.B. 5392, Madam President, would move to place this item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SEN. LOONEY:

Calendar 541, H.B. 5585, Madam President, would move this item to the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SEN. LOONEY:

Calendar 542, H.B. 5201 should be marked Go.

Calendar 543 should be marked PT.

Calendar 502, Substitute for H.B. 5526.

Calendar Page 8, Calendar 504, Substitute for H.B. 5478.

Calendar 515, Substitute for H.B. 5512.

Calendar Page 9, Calendar 524, H.B. 5653.

Calendar 526, Substitute for H.B. 5643.

Calendar Page 10, Calendar 529, H.B. 5399.

Calendar 531, H.B. 5557.

Calendar Page 11, Calendar 532, H.B. 5690.

Calendar 533, H.B. 5114.

Calendar 534, Substitute for H.B. 5233.

Calendar 535, Substitute for H.B. 5416.

Calendar 536, Substitute for H.B. 5474.

Calendar Page 12, Calendar 538, H.B. 5601.

Calendar 539, H.B. 5608.

Calendar 540, Substitute for H.B. 5392.

Calendar 541, H.B. 5585.

Calendar Page 13, Calendar 544, Substitute for H.B. 5429.

Calendar 546, H.B. 5204.

Calendar Page 14, Calendar 548, Substitute for H.B. 5631.

Calendar 549, H.B. 5216.

Calendar Page 15, Calendar 100, Substitute for S.B. 315.

Calendar Page 16, Calendar 140, S.B. 198.

Calendar Page 17, Calendar 178, S.B. 334.

Calendar 204, Substitute for S.B. 500.

Calendar 239, Substitute for S.B. 338.

Calendar Page 19, Calendar 281, Substitute for S.B. 517.

Calendar Page 20, Calendar 296, Substitute for S.B. 519.

And Calendar Page 22, Calendar 38, Substitute for S.B. 152.

And Calendar 213, Substitute for S.B. 584.

Mr. President, that completes those items placed on Consent Calendar No.4.

THE CHAIR:

I believe everyone has had an opportunity during the presentation to vote. The machine will be closed. The Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Motion is on adoption of Consent Calendar No. 4.

Total number voting 36; necessary for adoption, 19. Those voting "yea", 36; those voting "nay", 0. Those absent and not voting, 0.

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar is adopted.

Mr. Majority Leader, did you wish to proceed with

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to visit and see what goes on in the Capitol. I'm happy to have them with us this afternoon and I would appreciate a warm welcome from the group.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Having served as your legislative aide in the past, Representative Fox, I know how wonderful Kathy is.

Would the Clerk please call Calendar 398.

CLERK:

On page 30, Calendar 398, H.B. 5585, AN ACT CONTINUING THE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION AS SEPARATE AGENCIES. Favorable Report of the Committee on Government Administration and Elections.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Representative Wilber of the 63rd.

REP. WILBER: (63RD)

Good afternoon.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

I know everybody's trying to move their individual bills, etcetera, but if we could please quiet down.

Please proceed, sir.

REP. WILBER: (63RD)

Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Good afternoon.

REP. WILBER: (63RD)

I thought the clock was broke when I looked up there because I saw that same time a few hours ago. But I move the acceptance of the Joint Favorable Committee's Report and the passage of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

The question before us is on acceptance and passage. Please proceed, sir.

REP. WILBER: (63RD)

This bill repeals Section 146, 147, and 148 of Public Act 03-6JSS and maintains the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Consumer Protection as two separate agencies.

And was so eloquently stated by Representative Ward yesterday morning or this morning, that we made a mistake last year and we're correcting it and the thing that we really ought to look at is that agriculture in the State of Connecticut is a $2 billion industry and that agriculture is one of our economic cluster initiatives in the State of Connecticut and I move passage of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

The question before us is on acceptance and passage.

Representative Chapin of the 67th.

REP. CHAPIN: (67TH)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in strong support of this bill. The House Republican Caucus made this one of our priorities this session and I'm pleased to see that the Democratic House Caucus followed our lead on that.

Representative Ward did state last night that the budget we voted on at 4:00 o'clock, a.m. this morning, had many good things and bad things in it and I think this is the one thing that there's probably unanimous agreement on by every member in this Chamber, that this was a mistake last year and I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Thank you, sir.

Representative Cafero of the 142nd.

REP. CAFERO: (142ND)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure of debating Representative Wilber on a previous bill and I learned my lesson from that. So therefore, I have a question, through you, to Representative Wilber.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Please frame your question, sir.

REP. CAFERO: (142ND)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Through you. Representative Wilber, what is the fiscal note of this bill?

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Representative Wilber.

REP. WILBER: (63RD)

Through you, Madam Speaker. This is estimated to eliminate a personal service savings in fiscal 05 of approximately $250,000 and the associated savings and fringe benefits and costs are reflected in our bill. But one of the things is that it's been taken care of, hopefully last night and I appreciate that you're keeping me in line and trying to educate me and I thank you for your question, sir.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO: (142ND)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, since Representative Wilber got elected, I have lived for this moment where, I mean this, where I could turn to him, as my colleague, and say, oh, come on, Wilber.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Representative Caron of the 44th.

REP. CARON: (44TH)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, Madam Speaker, I sure wish you would save Representative Cafero being called on for last, if you don't mind.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support, strong support of the bill. My grandmother was exceptionally proud of her mother who was a widowed woman with four children, who built a dairy farm in Pomfret, Connecticut virtually by herself. She built a good living for her family. She was able to save some money and she was very proud of the fact that she passed AT&T stock down to the family and it was a very good thing.

Agriculture has been an important part of Connecticut's history, obviously, since the beginning and in spite of our technology prowess in the world economy, we are still as much a farming community as we are as a technological center for the world and Madam Speaker, this is a very good moment for Connecticut preserving agriculture.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Thank you, sir.

Representative Sawyer of the 55th.

REP. SAWYER: (55TH)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, a couple of years ago we had an avian flu epidemic in this state and

we actually did something that led the nation and we became and considered the experts on how to manage it through an isolation situation and with inoculation and what we did was actually prevent the mass slaughter of chickens across the State. Connecticut's one of the leading egg producers in New England and if you look at not only the chicken and egg population, depending which comes first, you have the - it's very hard sitting behind Representative Cafero.

So to have this is also the situation of cows. When I first was elected and I went to the Tolland Agricultural Center with many of the local State Representatives and we were escorted to this wonderful breakfast with the Tolland Agricultural Center folks, the local farmers, we were introduced to Dr. Al Cowan. And I think he is one of the purveyors of the statistics for agriculture. He's one of the leading spokesman and one of the things that impressed upon me was that at the turn of the century there were 3,500 small dairy farms in the State. Presently, there are just over 300. Now that would lead one to think that we have a grand reduction in dairy in this state and that perhaps the Department of Agriculture has outlived part of its usefulness, but I would tell you the reverse is true as to what Representative Caron said, when we talk about

technology, the technology in agriculture today is huge. And today, we actually have more cows, more bovine in the State under just a few farms than we did when they covered the State in the small mom and pop farms where they would have one or two cows.

The milk production is huge. We have also quite an expansion going on with our nursery stock production and sales.

So Madam Speaker, I would contend that this is a very smart move for the State economically, but also technologically.

Thank you, Ma'am.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Thank you, Madam.

Representative Widlitz of the 98th.

REP. WIDLITZ: (98TH)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in support of this bill also. This bill is one of the top priorities of the Environment Committee for this year.

Preserving our family farms really protects the landscape of Connecticut. It's also agriculture, as Representative Wilber mentioned, is a very important economic cluster. Our Bureau of Agriculture is also under this department.

This is a -- this needs to be a stand alone agency

to make sure that Connecticut's residents have a continued flow of fresh produce and dairy products. It's a very important initiative for Connecticut.

I'd like to thank Representative Wilber and also Representative Willis for all of their work and their leadership on this effort. This is an important bill and that's no bull.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Representative Fritz of the 90th.

REP. FRITZ: (90TH)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I too rise in support of this bill. Before the Environment Committee took up the issue, I had sent out a letter to those who represent farming communities and it was like in a flash there were sixty signatures to separate the two departments because agriculture is a $2 billion industry in the State of Connecticut. It's not chump change.

In all of it, we are number one in horse farms in the country. We are number two in oysters in the country, but number one in the quality of oysters.

But when we talk about open space, and we all stand and try to get money for open space through grants and everything else for our towns, but if you look around your communities and you see anybody who is engage in

agriculture, whether it is in the dairy area or whether it is in the growing area, and for me, much of my district is flowers, bedding plants. They are the preservers of open space. Without agriculture, we would not have the country in Connecticut that we are all so proud of.

I thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Representative Bacchiochi of the 52nd.

REP. BACCHIOCHI: (52ND)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I too rise in support of this bill. As many of you know, I have the proud honor of following Mr. John Mordasky's seat. He's a farmer from our district. He was a member of this Legislature for twenty-two years. I'm sure if he were here, he would speak loudly and clearly how important this is to my rural district and I urge my colleagues to support it.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Thank you, Madam.

Representative Googins of the 31st.

REP. GOOGINS: (31ST)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Glastonbury is about five, six miles right across the river from the City of Hartford and you wouldn't think, for as much of a suburban community, that it is a farming community, as

well, that is, its heritage.

Its strength, it was for years and years, the shade grown tobacco as well as the wonderful orchards for the fruits that are still grown there. We try very, very hard to keep our orchards and farming in the State and my constituents have asked me to support this separation. So it's very important to me and my constituents and I think to the rest of the State of Connecticut.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Representative Mikutel of the 45th.

REP. MIKUTEL: (45TH)

Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise briefly to lend my support to this bill. I come from a rural district and I have many people who make a living from agriculture and they've asked me to support this bill.

Connecticut needs a free standing Department of Agriculture to best advocate for the people who make a living from agriculture. It is a very important industry and I'm very happy to support it.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Representative Fahrbach of the 61st.

REP. FAHRBACH: (61ST)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I won't reiterate what everyone has said, but I want to say that I support this bill wholeheartedly for the hard working farmers of the State of Connecticut.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Thank you, Madam.

Would you care to comment further on the bill before us?

Representative Wasserman of the 106th.

REP. WASSERMAN: (106TH)

Thank you. Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to say, through you, Madam Speaker, I am still a farmer. I have my livestock and my Christmas tree farm and I'm all for this bill.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Thank you, Madam.

Would you care to comment further?

Representative Ward of the 86th.

REP. WARD: (86TH)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also rise to support the bill. Much has already been said. I think when we look at the fiscal note and see that in order to maintain an independent Department of Agriculture, the

cost is $250,000. I think it is certainly a prudent expenditure because that's the only savings there would been by taking away that special identity for agriculture.

I think we've come to the right conclusion that although that is a cost savings and we should look at every opportunity to save money, that this was not the right way to do it, that agriculture is too important to our State to not have a separate recognition and a separate agency.

It is both of economic importance to the State, but it is beyond that. And I think that we would be less of a state if we did not recognize the role of agriculture.

And so I urge all of the members to support this bill. It is pretty cost effective for an extra $250,000 to maintain an independent and separate focus for all of the agricultural activities throughout our State of Connecticut.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Would you care to comment further on the bill before us?

Representative Belden of the 113th.

REP. BELDEN: (113TH)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want the Chamber

to know that a couple of months ago on the Bond Commission, the Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Protection were being relocated and we were assured, after asking the question, that there is room in the new quarters for the Commissioner's office, the Commissioner of Agriculture.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Would you care to comment further on the bill before us?

If not, staff and guests to the Well of the House. The machine will be opened.

CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the Chamber. The House is voting by roll call. Members to the Chamber, please.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Have all members voted? Have all members voted? Please check the board and be sure your vote is properly cast. If all members have voted, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally.

The Clerk will announce the tally.

CLERK:

H.B. 5585

Total Number Voting 141

Necessary for Passage	71
Those voting Yea	141
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	10

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

The bill passes.

Representative Amann, our Majority Leader.

REP. AMANN: (118TH)

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, just momentarily we're going to have two of our finest Representatives in this Chamber to basically say their farewell to us. We have talked to both Representatives, as far as I understand. Noting that as much as we love both of them very much tremendously, we would ask, as well know, we have limited time, not to go on too long, that's the utmost respect to both of the individuals we love dearly, but we also have a lot of business to do today.

So with that, I guess, momentarily, Madam Speaker, you'll be calling upon these two individuals and then hopefully we can move on today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER CURREY:

Thank you, sir.

Representative Collins.

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REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you for your testimony. Dan McQuire followed by Mary Fritz.

DAN MCQUIRE: Good morning Madam Chairperson and all the distinguished members of this Committee. I'm Dan McQuire and I'm the First Selectman of the town of Lebanon, 7,000 population, located in the eastern part of the state. I'm here to testify on behalf of Bill 5585, and specifically on the preservation of the Department of Agriculture as a stand-alone agency.

There are many, many reasons that have probably already been discussed as to why they should be a stand-alone agency. Everything from sentimental reasons to emotional to actual hard facts. Well I'm here to tell you some of the hard facts. Our town of Lebanon is in primarily an agricultural community. As a matter of fact, eight of our ten largest taxpayers are directly associated with the Department of Agriculture in some manner to speak.

Back when the Avian Flu outbreak hit our area, we were in serious need for assistance, and I'm here to say that I firmly believe that had the Department of Agriculture not been a stand-alone department and free to speak to others on an equal plain, such as the Department of Health, and to quickly come in and evaluate the problems that we had at our egg farms, we may have seen absolute devastation to not only our community, but to the State of Connecticut as well.

It could have resulted in 3.5 million birds having to be done away with. But through the prompt action of the Department of Agriculture, who by the way, I must say, kept the towns that were involved completely informed as to what they were doing the whole way through this episode, where we were able to get through with a one of a kind inoculation program and without losing a lot of birds.

Now people don't understand in many cases what this egg business in our town is all about, but if you go to Stop and Shop or First National or A&P anywhere between Maine and Virginia, the chances

are that the eggs that you purchase came from Kofkoff Egg Farm, and that's the true fact of the matter. 200 million dozens of eggs a week go out of that place. They go out in railroad cars, trucks, it's a vital part of our community and our efforts.

And I'm just fearful that if the Department of Agriculture is sandwiched into another department, it will loose it's autonomy and it will become subservient to that department. I can't reiterate in strong enough terms how important it is, at least to the agricultural people in this state, to have that department be able to converse with their neighbors, other departments, other states, on an equal footing.

And I'm here to ask, in the strongest tone that I can, that the most serious consideration take place to make this and keep it as a stand-alone department. Some of the reasons and rationale for moving it were the cost that they were paying for their rentals, I believe now that has been resolved. And truthfully, as an outsider, but certainly a concerned citizen looking at the whole situation, I think that was the biggest bite was the rental, and I think that's been resolved, and I see no further, personally see no further reason why that department shouldn't remain as it was. I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak before you today.

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate you taking the time to come here today. And I would like to assure you that it is one of the prominent goals of this Committee to do just that, make sure that the department is a stand-alone department for many of the reasons which you've cited, and you're right, it makes absolutely no sense in any direction, cost-wise or -- in accomplishing their goals. Actually we'd like to see them have a little more funding and have more resources available to expand what they're able to do now. Thank you very much. Are there any questions or comments? Thank you.

DAN MCQUIRE: Thank you very much.

REP. WIDLITZ: Representative Mary Fritz.

REP. FRITZ: Good morning Senator Williams, good morning Representative Widlitz, and good morning members of the Environment Committee. I would like to echo what the First Selectman said from Lebanon I believe. You already have my testimony so I would really, really like to just talk to you, and I will be very short.

It amazes me to think that, could you see the Department of Consumer Protection going out and trying to deal with the incidents in Lebanon with regard to all those chickens? It really boggles the mind. What troubles me in all of this is that agriculture continues to be a target. Not too long ago the experiment station was a target, they tried to close it. Now we're back with, when we're short money we're going to get rid of the Department of Agriculture or we're going to merge it.

The lease was $13,000 a month. The item that this was going to save -- what -- the department was going to emerge to save this money. By moving it into the State Office Building, that whole issue disappears. So there is no reason why the Department of Agriculture should not stand alone. Agriculture is a $2 billion industry in the State of Connecticut.

We work so hard and we promote our state so well in terms of the country, the open space, the beautiful hills, the valleys, the people who work in agriculture are the ones who preserve these open spaces. Those are our farmers, our growers, our gentlemen farmers, our women farmers, all of the people who rely on the Department of Agriculture not only for their monetary success, but for the beauty of our state.

So I understand the mission of this Committee is to make sure that the Agriculture Department remains a stand-alone, and I pledge to you I will do anything I can to make sure that that happens. I thank you.

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you Representative Fritz. Any

other questions, comments? Thank you very much. Is Attorney General Blumenthal here yet? Okay, then I think we will go onto the public part of the public hearing, and I'd like to remind people to please try to keep your testimony to three minutes. Certainly we have the ability to follow up and ask you questions, and in many cases we have your written testimony. The first person to be called is Mike Morrissey, followed by Mike Winkler.

MIKE MORRISSEY: Representative Widlitz, Senator Williams, and other distinguished members of your Committee, I'm Mike Morrissey, Vice President with Bemer Petroleum in Glastonbury, Connecticut. Aside from my corporate duties I also serve as State Director to the National Propane Gas Association. I'm here this morning representing the local members of our national trade association. We're here speaking in support of RB218, AN ACT CONCERNING TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR CLEAN AND ALTERNATE FUEL VEHICLES.

Today more than ever it's important that we maintain these important tax incentives which reward private fleet owners who operate their motor vehicles on clean air, alternative transportation fuels like propane and natural gas. The air we breathe in Connecticut is still unhealthy, the fuel we buy here is still too dependent on foreign and unfriendly nations.

Those companies using clean air, alternate transportation fuels make our air cleaner and our state less dependent on foreign oil. This legislation, if not passed, would hurt companies like Yellow Cab, UPS, and the thousands of private business that use propane to power their forklifts here in the State of Connecticut. Private fleet owners who continue to use clean burning motor fuels reward us each day by improving the air that we breathe. These private fleet owners should now be rewarded again by passing RB218.

Earlier this week, I'm happy to report, the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Administration published a final rule in the Federal Register that extends the incentive

But I think this clearly says that if your buildings, or development, has an impact on Connecticut's air, land, or water, then that's something that has to be negotiated in a compact, and we need to know about that. And that is absolutely within our sovereign rights. So I appreciate your help on this issue.

ATTY. GEN. BLUMENTHAL: Thank you, and obviously, as is implicit in the bill, and you've recognized in your comments, this bill recognizes the sovereignty of other states or even federally recognized tribes, but in effect says sovereignty doesn't give a state or a tribe a pass on environmental laws. And another sovereignties would likewise hold us accountable, if it's another state for example, to observe their laws.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you, are there further questions? Thanks very much.

ATTY. GEN. BLUMENTHAL: Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Senator Edith Prague.

SEN. PRAGUE: Representative Widlitz, and Senator Williams, and members of the Environment Committee, thank you very much for this opportunity to testify. For the record I'm Edith Prague, Senator from the 19th District. I just want to go on record as supporting HB5585, AN ACT CONTINUING THE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION AS SEPARATE AGENCIES.

You know, I want to tell you what happens to a department when you roll it into another department, and I can tell you from personal experience. We use to have a Department on Aging in this state, and about 10 years ago, or 12 years ago, the Department on Aging was rolled in with the Department, then, of Income Maintenance and Human Resources, into what is now the Department of Social Services.

The department became the Elderly Services Division, and little by little whittling away at

the staff. There is now no Elderly Services Division, no distinct unit that provides advocacy for the seniors in this state. When you roll one department into another, little by little that department looses it's identity and looses it's power to advocate on behalf of those that it represents. I strongly urge you to vote this bill favorably out of Committee.

If we loose the Department of Agriculture, the farmers, the few farmers that we have left in this state, will have no strong voice of advocacy. Recently we had that huge problem with the chicken farmers of some kind of Avian Flu that the chickens developed, and it was through the efforts of the Department of Agriculture that they were able to save those chickens.

So sometimes it's worth the investment of state dollars, even in tight budget times, to preserve what we need to preserve, and that's advocacy for the farmers in this state. So thank you very much for this opportunity to go on record as supporting the bill.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you Senator Prague, and as Chairman Widlitz said earlier, it's one of our top priorities as Chairs. We can't speak for all our Committee members, but I understand that very many Committee members are also very concerned about this as well. So we thank you for your testimony.

SEN. PRAGUE: Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: David Medd, to be followed by Hugh Mathews and Bob Ferrarotti.

DAVID MEDD: Senator Williams, Representative Widlitz, and members of the Committee, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB5235, AN ACT CONCERNING DISPOSAL AND USE OF PUBLIC DRINKING WATER TREATMENT RESIDUALS, or SOLIDS, excuse me. My name is David Medd, I'm the Manager of Supply Operations for Aquarion Water Company. Aquarion provides water service to approximately 170,000 homes and businesses or a population of 587,000 people in 35 towns in Connecticut. We are

--

DAVID MEDD: Earthgro, correct.

REP. MUSHINSKY: No, but what's the reason that they're limiting it to that one facility only? Did they say?

DAVID MEDD: They have not said. It's the only, it's the only one I'm aware of in the state that they have allowed. And I think it has to do with some other permitting issues, but that's something DEP would have to answer.

REP. MUSHINSKY: Okay, I'm checking their testimony and they don't say why they do it either. I just wondered if there were neighborhood complaints, or is there groundwater complaints, or is there any legitimate reason for limitation to one facility?

DAVID MEDD: I can't answer that.

REP. MUSHINSKY: Okay, thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Other questions? Thanks very much. Hugh Mathews, to be followed by Bob Ferrarotti and Bill Anderson.

HUGH MATHEWS: Senator Williams, Representative Widlitz, and members of the Environmental Committee. I'm here to day to support HB5585. My name is Hugh Mathews and I'm Manager of Corporate Planning for Moark, a 50 year old company located in Bozrah, Connecticut, which is a parent company of our southern New England egg farms, KofKoff Egg Farms, New England Egg Farms, KofKoff Feed. Moark is owned and operated by Land 'O Lake's, which I think you've all heard of, which is a consumer food company based in St. Paul, Minnesota.

We're the largest agricultural egg producer in New England. We do approximately $100 million annually in business with over 300 employees. I'd like to speak in support of maintaining the Department of Agriculture as it currently operates and not merge it into the Department of Consumer Protection. As someone who has worked in the agricultural business

32 years, 16 years in Connecticut, I can honestly say the Department of Agriculture plays an important and necessary role in maintaining agriculture in Connecticut.

Recently at KofKoff we had an outbreak of Avian Flu. Were it not for the swift and steady action of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to urge the USDA to adopt Connecticut's recommendation for a vaccination program, rather than the depopulation program that the USDA recommended, our business in Connecticut would have been completely wiped out.

The direct cost to the state, cash payments required under state and federal law, of implementing a depopulation program would have been in excess of $65 million. The indirect cost to the state would have been hundreds of millions of dollars.

There is an interconnectedness between our business, we're a prime agricultural business, and the entire economy of eastern Connecticut. Quite frankly, without a Department of Agriculture, and an experienced farmer like Bruce Gresczyk as Commissioner, the adverse effect of the USDA's directed solution to our problem would have been felt throughout Connecticut. Mr. Gresczyk opposed the federal government's edict to depopulate our flocks, he saved the taxpayers of Connecticut millions of dollars and recommended a vaccination program which has the potential to save the United States billions of dollars.

The current Department of Agriculture has many critical functions, it does milk inspection and regulation, licensing functions, farmland preservation, marketing and sales of farm products, investigation and prosecution of animal cruelty, has and Office of the State Veterinarian.

The Department of Agriculture is essential to those of us in the agricultural business. The collective experience and institutional knowledge that is found within the department is vital to this industry. The fact is that the department, through its many functions, generates far more tax revenues

and economic activity than it costs. It's an investment that should be preserved and expanded, not consolidated with another agency. I thank you very much for your time this morning, well, this afternoon. Would there be any questions?

SEN. WILLIAMS: We appreciate your coming in. Yes, no, thank you very much for your testimony. Are there questions? Thank you for coming today.

HUGH MATHEWS: Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Bill Ferrarotti, to be followed by Bill Anderson and Randy Blackmer.

BOB FERRAROTTI: Thank you Representative Widlitz and Senator Williams and members of the Environmental Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in favor of Bill 538, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF PUBLIC GOLF COURSES AS OPEN SPACE. I had the opportunity to speak before this Committee last year about my nine hole golf course in Litchfield called Stonybrook Golf Course and my 18 hole golf course in Harwinton that was just recently built called Fairview Farm.

Owning both of these courses allows me enjoy working at something that I've loved doing for years. However, because of the high rate of assessments, and consequently the high taxation, I have to take a serious look at possibly selling my 200 plus acres for development.

The main reason for this is because we have to compete with municipal golf courses. I have, within an hour's drive of my course, at least 13 golf courses that I compete with. These municipal golf courses pay no property taxes to the town, no state taxes on seasonal passes, no sales and use taxes on their purchases, and if there was a profit made they pay no state income tax. This allows them to charge lower rates on season pass and greens fees that I have difficulty competing with.

I remind the Committee that 20 years ago I had to go to court to get Stonybrook's assessment to a point where I could operate the golf course, and in

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REP. BERNHARD: Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you, are there further questions? Thanks very much.

BILL ANDERSON: Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Randy Blackmer, to be followed by Gordon Gibson, and David Sutherland.

RANDY BLACKMER: Senator Williams, Representative Widlitz and members of the Environment Committee, my name is Randolph Blackmer and I am President of Connecticut Farm Bureau. I'd like to recommend strongly supporting HB5585, and if you would, with your indulgence, I'd like to ask the people here, friends, to please stand and be recognized who are here in support of 5585. Thank you.

Three years ago Farm Bureau began it's strategic planning process, and in the course of developing it's strategic plan surveyed and had in-depth conversations with our members on the future of agriculture in Connecticut. Farmers identify themselves as business people who control sprawl in our communities by maintaining working open space, provide economic stability to rural communities through farm product sales, provide balance to town budgets by requiring lower costs of services, supply up to 21 percent of the food utilized by Connecticut's citizens, produce plants and flowers which are marketed throughout the east coast, and maintain and improve environmental quality with agricultural best management practices.

Farmers feel one of the most pressing issues facing agriculture in our state is trying to enhance and strengthen a stand alone Department of Agriculture. When asked to expand on that, the resounding answer was, all agriculturally oriented functions must come back to the agency and make it more efficient and effective. Farmers want to work with trained, experienced, agricultural professionals in an agency which knows their industry.

The Department of Agriculture needs it's own

commissioner which will enable the agency to better communicate agriculture's unique position to the administration, other agencies, legislators, and other key leaders. In seeking to find a resolution to the budget during the legislative session, special session this summer, legislative leadership and the Governor, agreed to eliminate the Department of Agriculture, merge it with the Department of Consumer Protection.

This will be effective at the beginning of the next fiscal year. It is proposed to save $500,000 per year, with the savings being seen in combining some administrative positions and moving the agency back to the state owned office building. All of this can be done without elimination and merging departments. This elimination and merger will very effectively reduce agriculture's political and economic visibility as Connecticut's policymakers legislate and regulate farm issues.

With less than two percent of the state's population actively engaged in farming, this weakens the roll that agriculture plays in our state. Agriculture is multi-functional and plays an important part in our communities. Did you drive by working open space on your way to Hartford? Did you buy flowers for Valentine's Day? More important, have you had anything to eat today? If you answered yes to any of these questions, chances are pretty strong that Connecticut agriculture means something to you. Please support HB5585 and keep agriculture growing in Connecticut. Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you Randy. As my Co-Chair said, you've made us hungry now, you're reminded us that we need to grab lunch at some point. Thank you for your testimony. As you know, Chairman Widlitz and I rank this as one of our very most important priorities, and we said that a couple of times today, but just to underscore that for the other folks who are here, and the strong show of support that you demonstrated earlier.

RANDY BLACKMER: We'll remember that and we appreciate that very much, thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you, are there further questions? Thank you. Gordon Gibson.

GORDON GIBSON: Senator Williams, Representative Widlitz, members of the Environment Committee. I am Gordon Gibson from Vernon. I'm speaking today on behalf of the 5,000 Grange members throughout Connecticut. I am also speaking on behalf of the Association of Connecticut Fairs, a voluntary association of 53 agricultural fairs held each year throughout Connecticut, in support of RB5585, to preserve the Department of Agriculture.

Many people think of Connecticut as an industrial and commercial state, but agriculture is also a significant factor in Connecticut's economy. Connecticut's agricultural production has annual income of approximately $900 million, ranking number one in New England in both net farm income and also in cash farm income per square mile. Connecticut's agricultural industry --

(gap in testimony - changing from tape 1B to 2A)

GORDON GIBSON: -- jobs for 50,000 people, most of them low or moderate income wage earners. Each year our agricultural fairs attract more than one million visitors, most of whom contribute to Connecticut's tourism economy through the purchase of meals, lodging, souvenirs, and other activities normally associated with tourism.

Despite these impressive statistics, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture lacks the necessary budget and staffing to do its job. The Association of the Connecticut Fairs reimburses the Department of Agriculture for their inspector's time to inspect the livestock at our fairs, because the department has neither the funds to pay the inspectors overtime nor the staff to complete the inspections within the normal work week.

The Association of Connecticut Fairs performs random drug tests of animals in the pulling contests at our fairs because the Department of Agriculture does not have the qualified staff to

draw the samples. Rather than combine the Department of Agriculture with Consumer Protection for the sake of economy, we recommend the Department of Agriculture be provided with sufficient funds and staffing so it can fulfill it's statutory responsibilities.

My written testimony contains a paragraph about the Avian Flu, which others have already spoken about. I'll just add one sentence to theirs. The technology that was developed here, developed by our Connecticut Department of Agriculture, was recently used in both Europe and the Middle East to control similar outbreaks of Avian Influenza. Our Department of Agriculture is recognized around the world for that technology.

Our dairy farmers are facing a crisis. They are currently receiving approximately $1 per gallon for their milk, but it costs them approximately $1.35 per gallon to produce that milk. Meanwhile, our retail grocery and convenience stores are selling milk imported from other states at widely differing prices for the same product. I have personally seen the identical gallon of milk offered for sale at prices ranging from $1.99 to $3.29, and I cannot say that either of these prices is the extreme limit in Connecticut. If the Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Protection are combined, will the consolidated agency be concerned with our Connecticut dairy farmers, or only with the discrepancy in prices charged the retail consumer?

Last year the Governor's office advocated the merger of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Consumer Protection on the basis of net savings to the state. Savings have already been achieved by leaving the position of Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture vacant and by moving the department from lease space on Asylum Avenue to the State Office Building at 165 Capitol Avenue.

Last year the Governor's office claimed further savings could be achieved by cross training the Consumer Protection inspectors to also perform the duties of agriculture inspectors. However, the agriculture inspectors are currently classified two

salary groups above the Consumer Protection inspectors. If the Consumer Protection inspectors are cross trained and assigned to perform the duties of the Agriculture inspectors, they will have a very strong case to have their pay increased to that of the Agriculture inspectors. This would eliminate any further savings and would actually result in increased costs to the state.

The Connecticut State Grange and the Association of Connecticut Fairs urge the General Assembly to repeal the merger between the Department of Consumer Protection and the Department of Agriculture. Connecticut's agriculture industry contributes $2 billion annually to our local economy. It deserves to have its own agency within the framework of Connecticut's government with adequate funds and staff to adequately fulfill its statutory responsibility to protect and promote Connecticut agriculture. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you, are there questions? Thanks very much. David Sutherland, to be followed by Jonathan Bilmes and Greg Pinto. And just let me say, no one has really abused us to this point, but we do -- we would appreciate if you would try and confine your remarks to the three minutes. When you hear the bell your time is up. If you could quickly summarize after that just out of consideration of the 20 or 25 other folks who are signed up and are still waiting to testify. You may begin.

DAVID SUTHERLAND: Thank you. I'm here this afternoon to express the Nature Conservancy's strong support for Bill 5588 concerning forest management, with a few changes that we've recommended. The State Lands Management Unit of the DEP's Forestry Division has suffered a 50 percent loss in staffing over the last several years, and this reduction in staffing has greatly hindered their ability to accomplish very important ecological objectives on our state forests. It will also prevent the agency from going forward to get third party certification for their state forest timber products, which we think is very critical.

that he thought the court decision was incorrect, but I'm just beginning to read the proposed substitute language for that bill and haven't had a chance to digest what it means. But I think it would be useful for you all to take a look at, and I'd be interested in your thoughts on that.

GREG PINTO: That would be most helpful if we could get a copy of that. Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you. Thank you Representative Davis. I also would just note for the record that due to the miracle pace of our short session, the bill that we have on this agenda for our public hearing is identical to Bill, I believe it was 445, which we've already raised, we already heard, and at that previous pubic hearing the Department of Environmental Protection, as Representative Davis indicated, did come and present testimony and did at that hearing also propose substitute language. And so that's what we're looking at right now.

GREG PINTO: We have not seen that, I have not seen that proposed substitute language, and my understanding was the Deputy Commissioner was still drafting that. I don't know that that's done yet. If it is I'd love to see it. Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you very much. Ned Ellis, to be followed by Bernard Dzielinski and Rodney Chesmer.

NED ELLIS: Good morning Chairman Williams, members of the Environmental Committee. My name is Ned Ellis and I'm from Hebron, Connecticut. I'm a dairy farmer and conservationist believing that we've been given the land and we should take good care of it. We've been dairy farmers since the early 1700's in the town.

I'm speaking today to encourage you to keep the Department of Ag as a stand-alone department in supporting Bill 5585. Mapleleaf Farm currently maintains a herd of 380 animals with 200 milking and about 180 young stock. We have five full time employees and many part timers. In 1903 -- in 2003, not 1903, in 2003 we sold to the state 240

beautiful acres which would be perpetually in farmland preservation and in open space, producing clean air, food and providing breath taking vistas for people to enjoy. With the money from the sale of this land we were able to purchase 170 additional acres of land that we were using that had already had the -- that was already put in the Farmland Preservation Program, and this critical to the operation, to our operation.

I realize that many budget cuts have been made to try to come up with a balanced budget, and this is good. Many new initiatives and many millions of dollars have been spent to reinvigorate our cities, bringing tourists, conventions, et cetera, and making our residents feel comfortable about moving back to the city. Cities can be rebuilt, but once a farm is covered with blacktop and houses, it will never be restored as a productive unit.

The Department of Agriculture is small, but by merging it with the Department of Consumer Protection the monetary savings is minimal, as many have pointed out already, compared to loosing the identity of the agricultural businesses in our state. They've added over $2 billion annually to our economy. There is a huge demand for locally grown products. Nurseries, tree farms, dairy farms, poultry, crops and vineyards, these all add something to the beauty of our state.

Working lands help purify air and add clean water to our precious aquifers. Working farms allow for educational opportunities for our school children and their parents. These are some of the -- I think these get the best education when they come to the farm, who can experience where food comes from. And as you know, nutrition education has become very important in the learning process. Conservation programs, using federal lands need to be collaborated with state staffing.

Most importantly, without a Commissioner of Agriculture who understands and who can stand up for the remaining state agricultural body, and who can knowledgeably reply and deal with adverse situations which may arise, such as the Avian

Influenza in the situation which has been mentioned, Mad Cow Disease, aphid problems, agriculture's future and great contribution to our state is in very serious jeopardy.

A stand-alone Department of Ag will ensure that state leadership will continue to focus on the evolving needs of the agricultural community as well as recognize the loss of farms as a threat to their way of life. Let's keep it that way. I encourage you to use whatever influence you have to keep the Department of Agriculture as a stand-alone department with its own commissioner, and please support HB5585. Thank you for your time.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you. Are there questions? Thanks very much.

NED ELLIS: Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Bernard Dzielinski, then Robin Chesmer, and Steve Reviczky.

BERNARD DZIELINSKI: Thank you Senator Williams and members of the Environmental Committee. My name is Bernard Dzielinski and I live in Ridgefield, Connecticut. I'm a part time farmer there. As -- I'm here to speak in favor of 5585, and oppose the Department of Agriculture being submerged with the Department of Consumer Protection in July of 2004. There are many rationalizations that have been given such as agriculture has changed, but no examples or other reasons were given as to what these changes involve.

Agriculture in Connecticut has changed, that's for sure, and is changing into a growing and dynamic industry. Here are some examples. First, let's look at some preliminary results of the 2002 Ag census as compared to previous census data. Agriculture, the agricultural industry in the United States, a census is conducted five years in this country. In 2002, the number of farms was counted as 4,226, land in farms was 362,931. Comparing this to the 1997 census, the number of farms was 3,687, and land in farms was 359,313 acres. This data shows a significant increase in

the number of farms. For example, a 14 percent over 1997.

Increasing farm acreage also occurred despite the pressures of developers trying to buy up land. This increased one percent over 1997. This shows an upward trend in farming that's occurring in the State of Connecticut.

Some additional highlights of the 2002 Ag census include 82 percent of the farms are managed by family or individuals. 34 percent of the total farm operators are women. The age, the average age of principal operators in 2002 was 55 years. This is a steady number. In 1997 it was 55.6 years and in 1992 it was 55.0 years.

Connecticut farms, in terms of cash receipts, provide a strong value to the state's economy. In 2001 it was second only to Vermont in the New England states, and over the past 10 years it has been one, two, or three with Vermont and Maine. It is far outstripped Massachusetts in cash receipts. In the greenhouse industry, business -- in the greenhouse and nursery business cash receipts have shown a growth of 49 percent over 1996.

In the surrounding states there's a strong pro-agriculture environment. For example, in New York they have received $52 million from the United States Department of Agriculture for farmland preservation and rural development. Governor McGreevey of New Jersey recently, proudly announced that 20,000 acres of farmland was preserved in 2003, and since 1983 over 1,000 farms have been approved in it's Farmland Preservation Program. Governor Rendell of Pennsylvania has put agriculture as a key component in the economic development strategy for the state by earmarking $100 million for agriculture and tourism in the proposed stimulus package. In Delaware, a smaller geographically than our state, Governor Ruth Ann Minner has taken a strong stand for agriculture in her state. She promoted and initiative to preserve some 30,000 acres. Altogether, Delaware has preserved about 75,000 acres of farmland.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture is very proactive in adopting policies that support diversified farms throughout the farm economy in the state. It has promoted alternative marketing channels with the Farmer's Market Program and the Associated Women's Infant Care Program as well. It's support and growth of the Regional Farmer's Market is another example of the vitality of the agency in providing another marketing channel for our farmers.

It has strongly supported many seminars, it has recently supported many seminars for farmers to help them in managing risk in their operations. It's resources are used strongly to support agriculture, aquaculture industry along the Connecticut shoreline and elsewhere. Prime farmland throughout the state is under threats of development. The citizens of the state, of this state, in survey after survey, give overwhelming support for preserving farms.

The Department of Agriculture is vigorous in seeking out top quality farmland for preservation. This effort should be strongly supported by the legislature and pass dedicated funds for protection efforts. As lawmakers, it is my opinion you should become very, you should become vocal supporters of Connecticut farms and farms and farm products and lead by example by reversing the previous decision in order to maintain a separate Department of Agriculture for the good of the industry and the citizens of the state. Thank you for your consideration.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you. Are there questions? Thanks very much. Robin Chesmer, then Steve Reviczky. Again I would remind folks, please try and confine your testimony to within the three minutes. When you hear that bell your time is up and you need to quickly summarize thereafter out of consideration for the other folks who are still wishing to testify. Thank you.

ROBIN CHESMER: Good afternoon, I'm Robin Chesmer, you're going to get two for one. Stu Gadbois and I are both dairy farmers. We're both members of a

group called Very Alive, which has worked to promote Connecticut agriculture, the benefits of agriculture to our state. We've sent you messages in a milk bottle, we've given you little trucks that extend our message, and we're here today, a heads up on the importance of agriculture and our opinion of what this bill to -- what the move has been to combine the Department of Agriculture with the Consumer Protection.

Quite frankly we think it's a lousy idea, and when it's all said and done the savings will fit in this little tiny piggy bank. And that's how we feel about it. So we're glad you have come out with HB5585, and we're here to lend our support.

STU GADBOIS: I farm in Salem, Connecticut with my son, we milk 200 cows, and I'd like to point out that the savings apparently, which have been discussed by previous people, have been -- will be very minimal and may not even have anything to fit in that piggy bank. But I'd like to say that you know, they've helped me personally with farmland preservation, they're there when you have the Avian Flu issue has been discussed. I don't have chickens, but I have cows, and we can have disease problems, they would be there to help with that.

And so that it is that we have a stand-alone department. Senator Prague said it very well and gave you the example of the Department of Aging and what happens to one when it gets merged into another one. And if I need a department that will understand my business with my issues, agriculture has unique issues and special problems, and we highly encourage you to support this bill. And I certainly thank you for the -- I know that the two of you have expressed a concern that the Environment Committee is very strong in this, and we certainly appreciate that.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you, thank you very much for coming in. And I'll tell you, in the early afternoon it's always nice to have a few visual aids, little toys and things like that to perk us up a little bit, and we appreciate that. Thank you for coming out and supporting this bill. Steve

Reviczky, to be followed by Tom Villa.

STEVE REVICZKY: Senator Williams and members of the Environment Committee, my name is Steve Reviczky, and I come before you today as an Executive Council Delegate of the Connecticut State Employee's Association and a member of the Association's Legislative Action Committee in support of RB5585, AN ACT CONTINUING THE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION AS SEPARATE STATE AGENCIES. For your information, I am also a proud employee of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture working as a property agent with the Farmland Preservation Program.

Many members of the agricultural community have, or will share, specific testimony with you as to why an independent Department of Agriculture is vital to them and the future of agriculture in Connecticut. Quite frankly, their testimony is more compelling and articulate than I could possibly share with you today. I do however, want to make it clear that the Department of Agriculture, while small, is made up of dedicated and able individuals who strive to deliver the best service to the citizens of Connecticut every day.

As you are aware, the merger of the Department of Agriculture into the Department of Consumer Protection was passed by the General Assembly in an all or nothing budget deal that did no include the support or approval of any of the legislative committees of cognizance. In addition, to my knowledge, the administration's proposal to merge the functions of the Department of Agriculture into the Department of Consumer Protection was done without input from the agricultural community or the Department of Agriculture. And since the state budget was passed early last summer, little or no planning has been undertaken to ensure that a smooth and rational transition takes place on July 1st.

As a former first selectman and a legislative staff person here, I think I have a keen sense of what it will mean to Connecticut agriculture if these actions are allowed to stand. I believe that most

members of the General Assembly are also aware of the ramifications of a state agency being relegated to bureau status within another agency. One only need to look at the Governor's Midterm Interim Budget to see this impact. In this document, agriculture is reduced to one sentence, and one sentence fragment. In terms of bond programs, the Governor and the Commissioner of Consumer Protection and Agriculture recommend that there be none. No Farm Enhancement Program, no Environmental Assistance Program, and No Farmland Preservation Program, a program that has existed for more than 25 years.

I believe that the General Assembly has a unique opportunity to not only right this wrong, but to improve upon the Department of Agriculture's ability to serve the agricultural community and all citizens of Connecticut. Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you. Are there questions? Representative Mushinsky.

REP. MUSHINSKY: It's a somewhat heretical question but, in the department, for a while I was thinking of suggesting, except I'd probably get my head cut off but, thinking of suggesting a merger with the Department of Economic Development, because a lot of the farms are in a holding pattern. They maintain the farm for the duration of the owner's working life, and then they're sold anyway and lost to the state. Could we do more with Economic Development of farmers so that they could keep changing crops and changing what they grow as the market changes, so that there would be a more long-term future for agriculture?

STEVE REVICZKY: My personal opinion is, is that once again, agriculture would get lost in the mix in Economic Development. I think if one looks at the types of programs that are administered there, you know, I don't see a lot of first hand knowledge when it comes to agriculture. And in fact, a lot of the projects that are proposed by the Department of Economic Development consume prime and important farmland soils. So we're often at odds with them. And that being the case, I don't really see the

fit, personally.

REP. MUSHINSKY: Okay, well if the Department of Ag goes back to being a separate agency, can we do anything to beef up their economic development aspect so that farmers are kept up to date on changing markets? Because what I see for the future, looking into the future, is the continuing stress on the agency, and it'll be smaller and smaller and smaller, and it'll vanish, it'll just disappear, not even a merger, but vanish, unless the markets are changing continually so that agriculture can retain it's foothold in the state.

STEVE REVICSKY: The current Department of Agriculture does have a Bureau of Marketing and Technology. The staffing there, quite frankly, is really low. So they basically tread water there, unfortunately. But there could be more done to bolster their activities I think.

SEN. WILLIAMS: And actually, I'll just chime in, because Representative Mushinsky raises a good point. We do have some other legislation, and we've been working on concepts to strengthen the Department of Agriculture so that in the short-term and the long-term it's not just simply bringing back what was there before, which obviously some folks in the administration felt was not relevant, hence the proposal to consolidate it and not keep it independent.

But to revitalize it in a way where it not only is capable of its core functions right now, but addresses some of very important concerns about connecting producers to markets and making sure that Connecticut agricultural products are reaching the highest invest markets so that the economic viability of farming in Connecticut is improved. We can talk a lot about preserving farmland, but if we're not preserving the economic viability of farmland, the mere preservation of land alone is not going to be enough, so. Any other questions? Senator Cook.

SEN. COOK: Good afternoon. I just wanted to add, to help Representative Mushinsky a little bit, we do

have an agriculture cluster at DECD that is doing what it's doing now, but it doesn't mean that we shouldn't be expanding the scope to do a little more economic development initiatives for the agriculture industry. I mean I'm not sure I could condone putting Ag in the Department of Economic Development, I'd rather put the cluster in a new Department of Ag.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Anything else? Representative Hetherington.

REP. HETHERINGTON: Does the Department of Agriculture cover aqua farming, fish farms?

STEVE REVICSKY: Correct. Aquaculture Division is located down in Milford.

REP. HETHERINGTON: That's within the Department of Agriculture.

STEVE REVICSKY: Department of Agriculture, correct.

REP. HETHERINGTON: Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Anything else? Thank you very much.

STEVE REVICSKY: Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Tom Villa, to be followed by Don Francis and Kachina Walsh-Weaver.

TOM VILLA: Good afternoon Representative Widlitz, Senator Williams, and members of the Committee. My name is Thomas Villa and I'm the Director of Water Operations for South Norwalk Electric and Water. I'm here representing Connecticut Water Works Association.

CWWA strongly supports HB5235, AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE AND DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC DRINKING WATER TREATMENT SOLIDS. This act will provide reasonable, practical, and environmentally acceptable alternatives for the use and disposal of water treatment solids. Water treatment solids, also known as residuals, are a by-product of the water treatment process, and their use and disposal

disposal of water treatment residuals.

CWWA urges lawmakers to support HB5235. We request that the bill be revised to delete the requirement that DEP promulgate regulations by deleting the last sentence starting on line number 31. Since the operations plan requirements can be addressed as part of the permit process. Thank you.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you, are there questions? Thanks very much. Don Francis.

DONALD FRANCIS: Thank you Senator Williams and Representative Widlitz and members of the Environmental Committee that are still here. My name is Donald Francis and I am here on behalf of a group called The Working Lands Alliance. We are a coalition of over 140 Connecticut farmers, conservation groups, municipalities, food security groups, and our primary goal is to preserve farmland in the State of Connecticut.

HB5585

I'm not going to insult your intelligence by repeating a number of things you already heard about preserving the Department of Agriculture because it's the hour and because basically I think there's been a considerable amount of support from this Committee, and I want to thank you for that and hope that you're successful in reestablishing the Department of Agriculture.

I would take this opportunity to point out that in the Farmland Preservation Area carried out by the department, Mr. Reviczky was just here, there's 930 acres of farmland right now consisting of seven farms that have been waiting for the Bonding Commission, to get on the Bonding Commission agenda, for almost six months now. We have not been successful in getting that on the Bonding Commission agenda but if there's anyone here that can help, you will be able to save 950 acres of Connecticut farmland at a cost to the state of about $1,600 an acre. The other half of that money will be coming from the federal government, and that money is there from the federal government already, and also for some bargain sales where individual farmers have made a financial commitment

to keep that land in agriculture.

So I'll leave you with that message, preserve the Department of Agriculture and if you can help us spring that money loose to save 930 acres in seven towns, five towns and seven farms, we'd appreciate that.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Thank you Don, we appreciate your support of the bill, and certainly your advocacy on behalf of agriculture and your pubic service as a former very long time first selectman in Brooklyn. Representative Davis.

REP. DAVIS: Who served at that same time as the first selectman as Senator Williams and myself. Hey Don, I particularly just wanted to say I appreciate in your testimony that, in your written testimony, that if you were here saying that Connecticut bring a new industry that had a $2.2 billion annual contribution to the economy, $900 million in income, $50,000 jobs that didn't tax our services - -

DON FRANCIS: I think Gordon Gibson said that also, so I didn't want to repeat it.

REP. DAVIS: Okay, well both of you, thanks.

DON FRANCIS: That's an important issue. It's a major industry that is growing and it's really important.

SEN. WILLIAMS: Next, Kachina Walsh-Weaver, to be followed by Lori Longi, Bob Crook, and Lucy Nolan.

KACHINA WALSH-WEAVER: Good afternoon members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify before you today. For the record, my name is Kachina Walsh-Weaver. I'm with the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and I will quickly testify on a couple of bills before you. The first one, HB5586, AN ACT CONCERNING THE INLAND WETLANDS COMMISSIONS, CCM is very much in support of this. It would restore authority to the Inland Wetland Commissions to consider the impacts of develop on the wildlife and the biological characteristics surrounding these areas.

KACHINA WALSH-WEAVER: I wasn't here for it but I did talk with the proponents of the bill just a few minutes ago before I came in, which is why I stuck that caveat in there about the improvements. It was my understanding from talking with them that their biggest concern was one, the actual assessment of the greens themselves, and that they did not, they appeared to be in favor of having the clubhouses and the other such items actually taxed, but that they're running into large discrepancies from town to town as to how the towns were actually assessing the greens themselves. So I did tell them that we would talk with them later on --

(gap in testimony - changing from tape 2A to 2B)

REP. WIDLITZ: -- that you have development which may not be desirable --

KACHINA WALSH-WEAVER: Exactly.

REP. WIDLITZ: -- and more costly to the town in the long run. So we'll continue to have that discussion. Are there any questions? Thank you very much.

KACHINA WALSH-WEAVER: Thank you, have a nice weekend.

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you, you too. Lori Longi, followed by Bob Crook. Is Lori here? Okay, Bob Crook, followed by Lucy Nolan.

BOB CROOK: Representative Widlitz, members of the Committee, my name is Bob Crook. I'm representing the Coalition of Connecticut Sportsmen. I'm testifying in support of RB5588, AN ACT CONCERNING FORESTRY MANAGEMENT. There can be no doubt that Connecticut is now a forested state. The transformation from farmlands and edges has seriously affected our traditional environment, particularly concerning wildlife. And that's our major interest, wildlife.

Small game, which relies upon open spaces/edges, is rapidly disappearing due to loss of habitat. Among these species are the grouse, quail, rabbits,

organizations.

I'd also like to say that we are fully in support of 5585 for various reasons. That's the Department of Agriculture bill. Open space, farmland preservation, recreation, agriculture, are all interests to sportsmen.

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you Bob. Would you mind going back over that suggestion on line 16 to 27 on 5588 please?

BOB CROOK: Yes, if you start with, The Commissioner, on line 16, and then finish up where it's, on line 25, at Rainforest Alliance, what we suggest is all that be deleted. That's all the certification programs. Clearly, DEP has made a commitment to adopt the certification program at some time in the future, they have the statutory authority to do it, any, it seems to us, anytime you make a list, you're either putting in too many or leaving out some. DEP certainly knows who these organizations are, and they should lobby administratively rather than legislatively to get whatever certification program they want.

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you for that explanation. Are there any questions? Representative Hetherington.

REP. HETHERINGTON: Thank you Madam Chairman. I -- this is a very good initiative I believe. I, for many years, was an attorney for a forest products company and so I'm somewhat familiar with what you're trying to accomplish. My question is this, do you have any concern that the return that you think that this will produce may be hampered by controversies arising over cutting wood on public lands? I'm thinking particularly of the controversy that has arisen on the national scene with respect to cutting in national forests and in woodlands owned by the United States.

BOB CROOK: I think what you're talking about, I know the problem. There are some organizations who believe that this bill is going to be a clear cut bill, and that's totally decimating the forest. That is not good forestry practice and the DEP does

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you Bob, any further questions?

BOB CROOK: Thank you.

REP. WIDLITZ: Okay, thank you. Lucy Nolan, followed by Jane Harris and Deborah Moore.

LUCY NOLAN: Good afternoon Representative Widlitz, members of the Environment Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan, I am the Executive Director of End Hunger Connecticut, a statewide anti-hunger and food security organization with over 1,000 members, many of whom are the state's emergency food providers. I'm here today to speak in favor of HB5585, AN ACT CONTINUING DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION AS SEPARATE AGENCIES.

Currently the Connecticut Department of Agriculture organizes 65 farmer's markets in the states. These farmer's markets are often the one place where urban dwellers can get fresh produce and local produce. Recipients of WIC, Women, Infants, and Children, coupons, and senior nutrition farmer markets coupons, redeem them at the local market to buy fresh locally grown produce thereby increasing the nutrient values of their diet.

The Department of Social Services is looking into using the food stamp program at the markets as well. The farmer's markets create a great synergy between local farmers and low income residents in cities who may not be able to access fresh produce unless it's at the farmer's market.

The Department of Agriculture has a long history with, and works for farmers in business planning and development, developing workable solutions to specific issues. The Department of Consumer Protection has a very different mission, and while the two departments should work together, it's not advisable that they do so under, as one entity. On the Department of Agriculture's website is a link to the Connecticut Grown campaign, which states very well how the department works to partner with farmers.

And I quote, "the Connecticut Grown Program is an

ongoing initiative to increase the demand for Connecticut products from within and from with outside, and outside the region, increase sales and value of Connecticut products, increase farm products profitability, increase farm numbers and production to ensure equilibrium, supply and demand, diversification of farm products and farm use capabilities, increase visibility of Connecticut products via the Connecticut Grown Logo, and to improve and provide quality assurance and educate the consumer at large," end quote.

At the Department of Consumer Protection website what we find is for food is U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Food Manufacturer's Registration, is information on regulations concerning bioterrorism and food safety of imported foods. The focus in entirely different, as it should be. Creating and marketing locally grown accessible food as well, as well as a resource for our local agribusiness and the other is about creating safeguards for food regulation. They both have their place, it just does not make sense for them to be combined.

Our farmers give away millions of, give away a million tons of food to emergency food providers for food sites every year. It's gratefully accepted and used. Our local farmers are the link to our rich agricultural heritage and fill a need for those who may not have access to fresh food in our state. Please continue to maintain the Department of Agriculture separate from the Department of Consumer Protection, they have very far different roles in the state, and our low income residents need the continuation of local farms as a distinct business entities that are assisted by professionals in their field. Thank you.

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you for your testimony. Senator McKinney.

SEN. MCKINNEY: Thank you Madam Chair. Not -- I didn't have a question, I just wanted to comment and thank you for being here. And I think that your testimony here really shows the breathe and the

importance of the Department of Agriculture. I mean, I don't think a lot of our 180 whatever colleagues would understand that when we're talking about the Department of Agriculture, it's more than just about agriculture. It's open space preservation, protecting the character of our communities, and helping out people who are hungry. And so I think your testimony today as part of this is really helpful and pretty powerful from my perspective, especially coming from an area of the state where there aren't a lot of farms currently operating. So I want to thank you for being here.

LUCY NOLAN: And thank you.

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you. Senator Handley.

SEN. HANDLEY: Thank you, thank you for being here Lucy, and I think again, it's very important that we maintain these departments separately. And the role of the Department of Agriculture and maintaining the farmer's markets is critical. We have a farmer's market in my town, which is right beside a senior housing area, and the seniors on Saturday mornings come over and -- I think I asked you what the stamps they were using, because they were a separate book of stamps --

LUCY NOLAN: Right, yes you did.

SEN. HANDLEY: -- to buy food and, fresh food and produce. And also the sense of community that develops. I mean we see the same folks every Saturday and it's a wonderful opportunity for the folks in the downtown area, which is not easily, in which fresh fruit and grocery stores are not available. It provides this opportunity, and as I said, provides an opportunity for community as well. I hadn't thought about the Department of Agriculture in that role, and it's an important one.

LUCY NOLAN: If I could add to that. I mean I think that that is something that would get lost with the two departments going together, because the Department of Consumer Protection really does have it's, what it's working on, and it's a lot of food

safety and things. I don't think it would be promoting something that -- which is just so great, the farmers markets are really just a wonderful program for people in cities who can't get to supermarkets, particularly seniors.

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you very much for your testimony.

LUCY NOLAN: Thank you.

REP. WIDLITZ: Jane Harris, followed by Deborah Moore and Vivian Harris.

JANE HARRIS: Good afternoon Representative Widlitz, members of the Environmental Committee, thank you very much for letting us speak today. I'm Jane Harris and I'm a member of the Long Hill Estate Authority, and several environmental groups in Middletown. You have my written testimony, so I wish to speak just briefly about our support of SB541. SB541

As a member of several groups that support and maintain Middletown's two Olmstead design sites, I want to speak to the future economic consequences of the Olmstead Bill for the State of Connecticut. Just as a result of Senator Finch's public meetings about this bill over the last few months, we have seen some interesting consequences. The Knox Parks Foundation is planning a tour of the three significant Olmstead sites in Middlesex County on Connecticut Trails Day, June 5th. I think of this as an indication of the kinds of ecotourism that we could look forward to in Connecticut if we follow through, not only on the Olmstead Bill, but future marketing of our Olmstead heritage.

I think it would be a terrible shame and a waste to overlook something so simple as this, recognizing Fredrick Law Olmstead as one of the most accomplished and revered of Connecticut's sons, is something that could be done with no financial outlay whatsoever. And I think that's somewhat unusual in presentation to this Committee. So I thank you very much for your time.

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you for your testimony. Deborah

landscape architecture in America. He copied not the formal gardens of Europe, but developed a style that is unique to American and captures our love of the pastoral and wilderness. His most famous works are New York's Central Park, Boston's Emerald Necklace, Stanford University, and the Biltmore Estate. While Connecticut can't claim ownership to his grandest accomplishments, his firm worked on 278 projects in 54 towns in Connecticut. He is most noted here for his work on the Bridgeport parks, Institute of the Living, Trinity College, Yale University, Meriden's Hubbard Park, and consultation on the Hartford parks. Our own Olmstead Estate -- our own Long Hill Estate is now a public park dedicated to passive recreation.

Olmstead was born in Connecticut and his philosophy developed as a result of his rural Connecticut upbringing. His vision is as germane today as it was in his lifetime. Pleas support this bill and pass 541, AN ACT ESTABLISHING FREDRICK LAW OLMSTEAD AS A SPECIAL DAY, thank you.

REP. WIDLITZ: Thank you very much for your testimony. I'm sure we all wholeheartedly agree.

DEBORAH MOORE: Thank you.

REP. WIDLITZ: Vivian Harris.

HB 5585

VIVIAN HARRIS: Thank you. My name is Vivian Harris, and I am from New Milford, and I've come to support the Department of Agriculture. Now I don't want to reiterate everything that's already been said, so I'll make it quick. We've owned and operated a farm in New Milford for over 45 years, and before that the Harris Hill Farm was in Wethersfield where my husband's family farmed it for 100 years. Connecticut has gone through many changes and right now it's going through a change, agricultural changes. And right now it's going through one, and we now are -- we now see a growing industry of pick your own patches, ornamental horticulture, horse farms, roadside stands, AG entertainment, and organic farming, among others. And these are very viable businesses and growing in numbers. Smaller in size maybe, but farms none the less.

Connecticut imports much of it's food from states like California, Georgia, Florida, New Jersey, et cetera. Having had the opportunity to visit farms all over the country, I know that in a very short time, perhaps the next generation, these states will be consuming all the food they produce within their own state. For instance, Tennessee for the last couple of years has not exported any of its milk, something it did previously to surrounding states. I've heard of California shipping truckloads of milk to Florida and returning with orange juice. An extension agent from the University of Florida recently told me that Florida is importing more and more of its food. As population grows we consume more.

It takes water to produce food and we are fortunate to have enough rain in Connecticut that we do not use a high level of irrigation like Arizona and New Mexico, and California that produce much of our food. But as soon as the land is, in places like Arizona becomes irrigated and beautiful, it also becomes valuable for development. And there has been a creeping effect of housing across the irrigated land. So it's not hard to make a case that we will be producing less food, and we will be consuming more in the future.

Our government rationalizes that we do not need a big Department of Agriculture, and that's not so. We need more organization, effective distribution, promotion of our newer agricultural enterprises, and technical help to keep farms in business and the flow of food into Connecticut.

Do we want most of our food to come from outside the country where we have no control over pesticides and things like that? We are-- we will have to scramble in the market for food that we now enjoy all year around. Will there come a day when I rush to the supermarket because I heard there's a new shipment of lettuce? And I tell you that the answer is yes.

SEN. HANDLEY: Will you summarize, thank you.

VIVIAN HARRIS: Pardon?

SEN. HANDLEY: Will you summarize your statement please?

VIVIAN HARRIS: Yes ma'am, I sure will. Farmers are less than three percent of the population, and I don't know how we convenience the other 97 percent that it's in their best interest to have a strong Department of Agriculture. Thank you.

SEN. HANDLEY: Thank you, and I think you make a very good point. Please wait. Representative Chapin.

REP. CHAPIN: Thank you Madam Chair. I just wanted to thank you Vivian for taking the time and coming up and expressing your support on this very important issue. I know you and I've talked about it many times. I also wanted to thank you for showing that you can be successful in moving out of the dairy industry into other forms of agriculture, and you've done it, you and your family have done it so well. And I just wanted to thank you for that.

VIVIAN HARRIS: Thanks Clark, and thanks everybody for staying. I was afraid there wasn't going to be anybody left here by the time I got up here. Thank you.

SEN. HANDLEY: Oh no, some of us can hang on for a good cause. Thank you. You know, I think the point that you make that three percent of the population of this country feeds the other 97 is something that we really need to pay attention to.

VIVIAN HARRIS: We don't have the power, and the other 97 percent does, so, thank you.

SEN. HANDLEY: John Alexopoulos to be followed by Adam Moore.

JOHN ALEXOPOULOS: Thank you.

SEN. HANDLEY: Good afternoon.

JOHN ALEXOPOULOS: I appreciate, thanks for having me here, I appreciate that. I'm here to take this opportunity to support the SB541, that would make

students at the University of Connecticut who are involved very intimately with design projects in many communities in Connecticut. We do a lot of service outreach. And many of the principles and ideals that they utilize, knowingly or unknowingly, are due to the influence of Fredrick Law Olmstead and his office, and then his legacy to the profession of landscape architecture. And that's enough.

SEN. HANDLEY: Thank you very much.

JOHN ALEXOPOULOS: Thank you, I'm sorry.

SEN. HANDLEY: Are there any comments? I might say, you come connected to an important tradition at the University of Connecticut with the work of Rudy Fabretti --

JOHN ALEXOPOULOS: That's right, who is my mentor.

SEN. HANDLEY: -- who began -- well he was my mentor when I was on the State Preservation Review Committee, because he forced us to look at the made landscape as well as constructed buildings --

JOHN ALEXOPOULOS: That's right.

SEN. HANDLEY: -- to understand --

JOHN ALEXOPOULOS: And it's more critical today, all these interconnections, than it ever was before.

SEN. HANDLEY: Absolutely, absolutely.

JOHN ALEXOPOULOS: Thank you very much for your time.

SEN. HANDLEY: Thank you. Our next speaker is Adam Moore, to be followed by Paul Bradley. Good afternoon.

ADAM MOORE: Good afternoon, thank you Senator Handley, members of the Environment Committee. My name is Adam Moore. I'm the Executive Director of the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association. We submitted some written testimony on four bills, and I'll go through it briefly.

On SB541, AN ACT ESTABLISHING FREDRICK LAW OLMSTEAD DAY, we strongly support this bill. And I just wanted to note for you that there's been a whole grassroots coalition of groups and individuals interested in this project and interested in creating an Olmstead Trail. That's been assembled under the leadership of Senator Finch. There's actually been a grant that we've been awarded from the Rockfall Foundation. So there's even some private money going to support this. So I urge you to support this bill on recognizing his birthday.

Regarding Bill 5585, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION AS SEPARATE AGENCIES, we strongly support this and echo the comments made by many who have spoken before me today. On Bill 5586, AN ACT CONCERNING INLAND WETLANDS COMMISSIONS, we oppose this bill because I think the biodiversity language that's inserted into this bill is far too broad. We are however, very concerned about the Avalon Bay decision. I'm interested in reading the substitute bill that DEP has put out. I haven't read it yet. But we are interested in working with this Committee and others on addressing that issue.

And we support Bill 5588, AN ACT CONCERNING FORESTRY MANAGEMENT. Basically it does two things. It requires the Department of Environmental Protection to undertake one of a number of forestry certification programs, and also allows the department to keep revenues generated by timber sales that are in excess of $800,000 and put the excess in the Conservation Fund, presumably to hire additional foresters.

I would note that you could address some of the points that Mr. Cook made regarding certification by using the word may instead of the word shall in the bill. In fact, I think that's better than compelling the department to apply to one of these programs, which they would probably would not get certified under for now because there aren't enough foresters simply to keep up with the boundary market.

JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS

ENVIRONMENT
PART 3
717-1075

2004

(34)

SB 541 An Act Establishing a Frederick Law Olmsted Day

HB 5585 An Act Continuing the Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Protection as Separate Agencies

HB 5586 An Act Concerning Inland Wetlands Commissions

HB 5588 An Act Concerning Forestry Management

Testimony of Adam R. Moore, Executive Director of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association

March 5, 2004

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Honorable Members of the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, I am pleased to offer testimony on the four bills described as follows:

SB 541 An Act Establishing a Frederick Law Olmsted Day

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association strongly supports the establishment of a "Frederick Law Olmsted Day" on April 26 of each year. We note that Frederick Law Olmsted and his firm designed many of the parks and landscapes that we know and love in Connecticut, including Beardsley Park and Seaside Park in Bridgeport, Hubbard Park in Meriden, the Long Hill Estate in Middletown and many more. A grassroots group of Olmsted enthusiasts, advocates and landscape architects has met on three occasions to discuss the possibility of the creation of an Olmsted Trail. The Connecticut Forest & Park Association has just been awarded a grant by the Rockfall Foundation to gather relevant landscape information in support of such a Trail. The recognition of the birthday of Frederick Law Olmsted would be a great step in support of this broad-based effort. We do note that Mr. Olmsted's name is misspelled in the bill language, containing an "a" in error.

HB 5585 An Act Continuing the Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Protection as Separate Agencies

We strongly support continuing the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Consumer Protection as separate, independent state agencies. Both agencies perform critical missions. We note that agriculture is a critical component of our economy in Connecticut, it contributes to the desirability of Connecticut as a tourist destination, it conserves open space while keeping working land on the tax roles, and provides a reliable, local source of home-grown food at a time when homeland security issues are so important. We believe that the mission of the Department would be compromised and diluted were it to be combined with the Department of Consumer Protection.

HB 5586 An Act Concerning Inland Wetlands Commissions

The Association is opposed to HB 5586 which would allow inland wetlands agencies to regulate activities that would impact or affect the biodiversity of wetlands or watercourses.

(26)

Working Lands Alliance

A Multi-interest Coalition Working to Preserve Connecticut's Farmland

RE: **In support of HB 5585** - AN ACT CONTINUING THE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION AS SEPARATE AGENCIES.

Submitted By: Donald Francis, Working Lands Alliance, chairman
Submitted On: March 05, 2004

Senator Williams, Representative Widlitz, and other members of the Environment Committee, thank you for your consideration of Raised Bill 5585.

My name is Donald Francis and I am here on behalf of the Working Lands Alliance-- we are a coalition of over 140 Connecticut farmers, conservation organizations, food security groups, and local government associations. Our coalition is dedicated to preserving Connecticut's remaining farmland.

Although the focus of our work is to increase the state's investment in farmland, we are here today because the elimination of a stand-alone Department of Agriculture suggests that the State's overall commitment to the agriculture sector is dwindling. We are very alarmed by this shift and would like to respectfully remind the Environment Committee of the following facts:

ONE: Agriculture is thriving in Connecticut. The greenhouse and nursery sector, in particular, have demonstrated unprecedented growth in the past year. Dairy farmers have adapted their businesses to remain competitive. Small farms are developing the highest quality of specialty food items such as wine and cheese and sheep's milk.
TWO: In order for agriculture to continue to thrive, Connecticut farmers will need affordable farmland to purchase, to expand their acreage, to permit sustainable land management through crop rotation, and to buffer their farms against encroaching development.
THREE: The State's Farmland Preservation Program has benefited immensely from the consistent focus and interest in farmland that has been provided by the independent State Department of Agriculture.
FOUR: Applicants to the state's Farmland Preservation Program need to know that the state values agriculture and is therefore willing to protect preserved farmland from non-agricultural uses.
FIVE: With more opportunities to win federal matching funds for farmland preservation, the State has got to be in a position where it can demonstrate past accomplishments, programmatic integrity, and administrative stability. All of these are jeopardized if the State's Farmland Preservation Program is either relocated to another state department or if there is no longer a State Department of Agriculture....I'd like to point out that in 2003, through the Federal Farmland Protection Program, Connecticut received $1.6 million in matching dollars for farmland preservation, including 7 farms in the State Farmland Preservation Program.

c/o Hartford Food System • 509 Wethersfield Avenue • Hartford, Connecticut 06114
Phone 860 296 9325 • Fax 860 296 3326 • Email info@workinglandsalliance.org

Once a department is gone, we will forever lose that voice. And I am not talking about just the voice of the farmers.

A strong Dept. of Agriculture gives all of us a voice:
Including the environmentalists - because farms prevent flooding, protect wildlife and watersheds
Including food security advocates- because farms are part of a dwindling foodshed
Including the consumers - who overwhelmingly have expressed an desire for locally grown food
Including the towns - who know that farms attract new residents and are key to smart growth.
Are you aware that in the town of Shelton the Chamber of Commerce takes prospective businesses on a tour of their farms to show them how relocating to Shelton will mean a better quality of life for their employees?

Let me end with this thought:
If I was to appear before you today and tell you I could bring Connecticut a new industry:

- that would make a $2.2 billion dollar annual contribution to the states economy,
- that would provide $900 million in annual income,
- that would provide employment for 50,000 men , women, and teenagers in production service, processing, quality control and marketing,
- that would require only .31 cents in services for each dollar it generates,
- that enhances the states tourism industry with places for tourists to visit and purchase nutritious food and high quality agriculture products.....

my guess is the Governor, the legislature, and every department would be standing in line to meet my every need to bring my business here.

I would only add that the current spotlight on the Dept. of Agriculture might present an opportunity to think constructively about what Connecticut agriculture needs most from its agency. We urge you to look for those opportunities to not only restore the Dept. of Agriculture, but also look for ways to make the Farmland Preservation Program stronger. Right now there are 7 farm applications that have waited months for the Bond Commission to purchase their development rights. This is unacceptable, and a major threat to the program's integrity. We look to your leadership to keep these obstacles in mind as we spend our energies defending the Dept. of Agriculture from elimination.

Thank you for your time.

(24)

MARCH 5, 2004

TESTIMONY OF STEVEN K. REVICZKY

BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

IN SUPPORT OF RAISED COMMITTEE BILL NO. 5585 AN ACT CONTINUING THE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION AS SEPARATE STATE AGENCIES

Senator Williams, Representative Widlitz, members of the Environment Committee, my name is Steve Reviczky. I come before you today as an Executive Council Delegate of the Connecticut State Employees Association and a member of the Association's Legislative Action Committee **in support of RAISED HOUSE BILL 5585 AN ACT CONTINUING THE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION AS SEPARATE STATE AGENCIES.** This bill seeks to maintain the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Consumer Protection as independent state agencies.

For your information, I am also a proud employee of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture working as a property agent with the Farmland Preservation Program.

Many members of the agricultural community have or will share specific testimony with you as to why an independent Department of Agriculture is vital to them and the future of agriculture in Connecticut. Quite frankly, their testimony is more compelling and articulate than I could possibly share with you today.

I do, however, want to make it clear that the Department of Agriculture, while small, is made up of dedicated and able individuals who strive to deliver the best service to the citizens of Connecticut every day.

As you are aware, the merger of the Department of Agriculture into the Department of Consumer Protection was passed by the General Assembly in an "all or nothing" budget deal that did not include the support or approval of any of the legislative committees of cognizance. In addition, to my knowledge, the administration's proposal to merge the functions of the Department of Agriculture into the Department of Consumer Protection was done without input from the agricultural Community or the Department of Agriculture. And since the state budget was passed early last summer, little or no planning has been undertaken to ensure that a smooth and rational transition takes place on July 1st.

As a former first selectman and legislative staff person, I have a keen sense of what it will mean to Connecticut agriculture if these actions are allowed to stand. I believe that most members of the General Assembly are also aware of the ramifications of a state agency being relegated to the status of a bureau within another agency. One need only look at the Governor's Midterm Budget Adjustments dated February 4, 2004 to see the impact. In this document, Agriculture is reduced to one sentence and one sentence fragment (pages 130 & B-56). In terms of bond programs, the Governor and Commissioner of Consumer Protection and Agriculture recommend that there be none. No Farm Enhancement Program. No Environmental Assistance Program and no Farmland Preservation Program, a program that has existed for more than 25 years. Ironically, the Governor's proposed midterm budget states "constituencies of the current agencies will continue to receive the same quality services under the new agency, especially in the Bureau of Agriculture." This is simply untrue.

I believe that the General Assembly has a unique opportunity to not only right this wrong but to improve upon the Department of Agriculture's ability to serve the agricultural community and all citizens of Connecticut.

Thank you.

Budget Summary

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION & AGRICULTURE

AGENCY PURPOSE

The functions of the Department of Agriculture are being merged with the Department of Consumer Protection effective June 31, 2004

- To eliminate the hazards of adulterated, contaminated, or unsanitary food products by regulating the manufacture and sale of food products in the State of Connecticut.
- To prevent the diversion of controlled drugs by regulating the manufacture, distribution and sale of drugs, cosmetics and medical devices.
- To prevent the sale of alcoholic liquor to minors and intoxicated persons and to ensure that licensed premises are safe and sanitary by regulating the distribution, sale, and dispensing of alcoholic liquor.
- To ensure that the 193,000 people or businesses in 190 trades and professions are qualified to offer their services and/or products by administering one of the largest licensing and registration programs in the State.
- To ensure the accuracy of all weighing and measuring devices to provide a fair and equitable marketplace for both buyer and seller.
- To protect consumers from unfair, deceptive or unsafe practices through consumer education, mediation, arbitration and enforcement activities.
- To foster agriculture by developing, promoting and regulating agricultural businesses; protecting agricultural and aquacultural resources; and enforcing laws pertaining to the humane treatment of domestic animals.

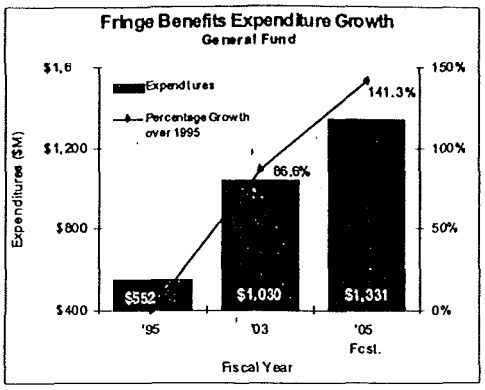
RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

- Conducted an unprecedented number of complex controlled substance investigations during the past year that resulted in several high-profile criminal prosecutions.
- Developed an educational program for new pharmacists that covers drug law, diversion issues, and prescription errors as well as corrective training for pharmacists found to have committed prescription errors.
- Established the "Increased Communication Decreased Paper" (ICDP) pilot program to improve communication and reduce paperwork among government regulatory agencies and private sector entities (hospitals, pharmacies, industry, law enforcement & health-care professionals). Phase 2 implementation will expand its on-line outreach activities and increase the number of participants.
- Conducted multi-agency sting operations to protect consumers from unscrupulous home improvement contractors, which resulted in the arrests of unregistered home improvement contractors and unprecedented requests for new applications. $1.7 million in restitution was paid to Connecticut consumers from the Home Improvement Guaranty Fund during FY2002-03.
- Identified and recalled 19 dangerous toys, and conducted 460 site inspections to ensure site compliance with the Federal Hazardous Substances Act and the Connecticut Child Protection Act.

RECOMMENDED ADJUSTMENTS

	2004-2005
Reductions	
• Eliminate Funding for Vacant Position	-26,420
• Annualize FY2004 Reductions	-5,000
• Eliminate the Seafood and Wine Councils	-95,000
Reallocations or Transfers	
• Centralize IT Positions at DoIT	-143,966
Technical Adjustments	
• Early Retirement Incentive Plan Savings	-1,038,804
• Fleet Operations Savings	-48,928
• Transfer Business Services Funds to DoIT	-42,558
• Regional Market - Create Separate Fringe Benefit Account	

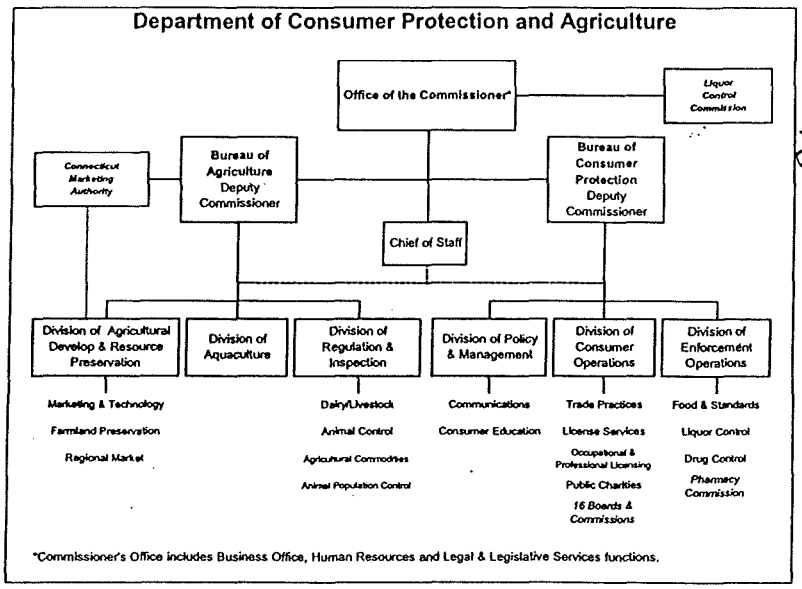
increase 141 percent through FY 2004-05.



Departments of Consumer Protection and Agriculture Merger

The 2003-05 biennial budget merges the Department of Consumer Protection and the Department of Agriculture effective July 1, 2004. The new organization will focus on the two new bureaus – the Bureau of Agriculture and the Bureau of P c .

While the organization will remain essentially the same as that of the precursor agencies, savings will be realized through the consolidation of administrative staff and by instituting efficiencies in agency activities. For example, instead of both agencies sending staff to inspect different product lines at the same site, it would be more efficient to have one staff person do the entire inspection.



Constituencies of the current agencies will continue to receive the same quality services under the new agency, especially in the Bureau of Agriculture where the Governor is committed to have a Deputy Commissioner for Agriculture.

CATCH-F

The new Connecticut Commission on Arts, Tourism, Culture, History and Film is off to a good start. After some delays in setting up in the new financial system, the new agency, the successor to the Arts Commission, Historical Commission, and Tourism Bureau of DECD, has begun making grants to both tourism districts, arts organizations and other attractions listed in the special act statute, arts organizations.

The primary change proposed in this adjusted budget is that the agency will now be subject to appropriation rather than being funded through an intercept. The change ensures that the agency is subject to as much scrutiny as other agencies. Further, an appropriation ensures that funding can go out in a timely fashion to entities relying on predictable funding each year. Under current law, funds will not be able to go out until October at the earliest of each fiscal year because hotel tax receipts are not credited until that time.

While just $20 million in funding was intercepted for CATCH-F in the adopted budget, Governor Rowland's adjusted budget makes $26 million available to CATCH-F, with an additional $1.1 million budgeted on behalf of the agency in fringe benefit accounts.

In the current fiscal year, the agency had $24.5 million available to it, including carryforward funding. The Office of Policy and Management had an additional $4.2 million for the convention center, bringing total CATCH-F funding to $28.7 million. Thus, reductions in the agency are minimal.

Notable increases in the agency are $1 million for Mystic Aquarium and $1 million for the Science Center.

We have owned and operated a farm in New Milford for over 45 years. Before that, Harris Hill Farm was in Wethersfield where my husbands family farmed for 100 years.. From early times to now, farms have had to go through many changes here in Connecticut and we are experiencing a change right now . We now see a growing industry of pick your-own-patches, ornamental horticulture, horse farms, roadside stands, Ag-entertainment and organic farming.. These are very viable businesses and growing in numbers. Smaller in size, maybe, but farms non the less.

Connecticut imports much of its food from states like California, Georgia, Florida, New Jersey etc. Having had the opportunity to visit farms all over the country, I know that in a very short time, perhaps the next generation, these states will be consuming all the food they produce within their own state! For instance, Tennessee for the last couple of years has not exported any of its milk, something it did previously to the surrounding states . I've heard of California shipping truck loads of milk to Florida and returning with orange juice. An extension agent from the University of Florida recently told me that Florida is importing more and more of its food. As population grows, we consume more and more food.

It takes water to produce food. We are fortunate to have enough rain in Connecticut so that we do not use a high level of irrigation like Arizona, New Mexico and California, who produce much of our food. As soon as land in places like Arizona becomes irrigated and beautiful it also becomes valuable for development. There has been a creeping effect of housing across the irrigated land. It is not hard to make a case that we will be producing less food in the future.

Our government rationalizes that we do not need a big Department of Agriculture. NOT SO! We need more organization, effective distribution, promotion of our newer agricultural enterprises and technical help to keep farms in business and the flow of food into Connecticut.

Do we want most of our food to come from out of the country, where we have no control over things like pesticides? Will we have to scramble in the market for food that we now enjoy year around? Will there come a day when I rush to the supermarket because I heard there is a new shipment of lettuce? I'm afraid the answer is yes.

We need a strong Department of Agriculture , not for what we have, but for what we will need!

Farmers are less then 3% of the population. How do we convince the other 97% that it is in their best interest to embrace agriculture , to become pro-active and to understand the problems? Farmers are accused of whining, and maybe it's true, but where do we go to tell people the things we see happening?

I support a strong Dept. of Agriculture and I encourage everyone else to do the same.

Thank you.
Vivian Harris, Harris Hill Farm ,New Milford

Graywall Farms
Robin A. Chesmer & Lincoln B. Chesmer
688 Trumbull Highway
Lebanon, CT 06249
860/642-6011

March 5, 2004

Testimony of Robin A. Chesmer in SUPPORT of HB 5585
An Act Continuing the Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Protection as Separate Agencies.

I am here today to testify in SUPPORT of House Bill 5585.

My son and I operate Graywall Farms, a 300 cow dairy farm in Lebanon, with over 500 acres enrolled in Connecticut's Farmland Preservation Program.

I am a member and chairperson of Very Alive, a group of farmers and agri-business people that works together to enhance Connecticut agriculture. Very Alive has held informative tours and events to demonstrate the many benefits of agriculture to our state: economic benefits and jobs, fresh food and produce from local family farms, wildlife habitats and open space, recreational opportunities, urban sprawl solutions and quality of life benefits.

The members of Very Alive are positive about the future of the business of agriculture, and it needs to be emphasized that agriculture is a business. Connecticut, being situated between Boston and New York City, is in the midst of one of the largest consumer markets in the world that offers huge opportunities for Connecticut agriculture.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture plays a 'key' role in all of these issues and importantly, how our state will look in the future. The Department of Agriculture is 'key' to preserving farmland for future generations, marketing programs, regulatory guidance, enhancement programs, public relations, managing disease outbreaks and homeland security.

Connecticut Farm Bureau, The Working Lands Alliance and Very Alive have organized the 'Keep It Growing' campaign to raise awareness of the importance of a stand-alone Connecticut Department of Agriculture.

There are many, many good reasons to maintain an independent, stand-alone, Department of Agriculture in Connecticut.....there are not any good reasons to merge it with the Department of Consumer Protection.

The proposed merge was enacted swiftly and without the benefit of debate or public comment. There is no evidence of any financial savings. There is no plan to demonstrate how efficiencies would be gained. The negative impact to our states agricultural business community from the loss of a stand-alone Department of Agriculture, with its cabinet level commissioner, has not been considered. Simply stated, the merge is a lousy idea that is not in the best interests of Connecticut's agricultural future.

I am pleased that HB5585 has been introduced to correct the situation.

Robin A. Chesmer

Robin A. Chesmer

(16)

TESTIMONY OF
THE CONNECTICUT STATE GRANGE
AND
THE ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT FAIRS, INC.
IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 5585,
AN ACT CONTINUING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND
THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION AS SEPARATE AGENCIES

MARCH 5, 2004

I am Gordon Gibson of Vernon. I am speaking today on behalf of the 5,000 Grange members throughout Connecticut. I am also speaking on behalf of The Association of Connecticut Fairs, Inc., a voluntary association of 53 agricultural fairs held each year throughout Connecticut, in support of Raised Bill No. 5585, An Act Continuing the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Consumer Protection as Separate Agencies.

Many people think of Connecticut as an industrial and commercial state, but agriculture is also a significant factor in Connecticut's economy. Connecticut's agricultural production has annual income of approximately $900 million, ranking number one in New England in both net farm income and also in cash farm income per square mile. Connecticut's agricultural industry provides jobs for 50,000 people, most of them low or moderate income wage earners, in production, service, processing and marketing. Each year our agricultural fairs attract more than one million visitors, most of whom contribute to Connecticut's tourism economy through the purchase of meals, lodging, souvenirs and other activities normally associated with tourism.

Despite these impressive statistics, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture lacks the necessary budget and staffing to do its job. The Association of Connecticut Fairs reimburses the Department of Agriculture for the inspectors time to inspect the livestock at our fairs because the Department has neither the funds to pay the inspectors overtime nor the staff to complete the inspections within the normal work week. The Association of Connecticut Fairs performs random drug tests of animals in the pulling contests at our fairs because the Department of Agriculture does not have the qualified staff to draw the samples. Rather than combine the Department of Agriculture with the Department of Consumer Protection for the sake of economy, we recommend the Department of Agriculture be provided with sufficient funds and staffing so it can fulfill its statutory responsibilities.

When avian influenza threatened Connecticut's poultry industry last summer, the Department of Agriculture successfully lobbied the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop and implement the technology and vaccines to innoculate birds rather than euthanize entire flocks, thereby saving our poultry farmers from financial disaster and at the same time avoiding a major disposal problem of dead birds. That technology, developed here in Connecticut, was recently used in Europe and the Middle East in a similar outbreak of avian influenza.

Our dairy farmers are facing a crisis. They are currently receiving approximately $1.00 per gallon for their milk, but it costs them approximately $1.35 per gallon to produce this milk. Because of this, we are losing an average of one active dairy farm every week. Meanwhile, our retail grocery and

convenience stores are selling milk imported from other states at widely differing prices for the same product. I have personally seen the identical gallon of milk offered for sale at prices ranging from $1.99 to $3.29 and I cannot say that either of these prices is the extreme limit in Connecticut. If the Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Protection are combined, will the consolidated agency be concerned with our Connecticut dairy farmers, or only with the discrepancy in prices charged the retail consumer?

Last year the Governor's office advocated the merger of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Consumer Protection on the basis of net savings to the State. Savings have already been achieved by leaving the position of Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture vacant and by moving the Department of Agriculture from leased space on Asylum Avenue to the State Office Building at 165 Capitol Avenue. Last year the Governor's office claimed further savings could be achieved by cross training the consumer protection inspectors to also perform the duties of agriculture inspectors. However, the agriculture inspectors are currently classified two salary groups above the consumer protection inspectors. If the consumer protection inspectors are cross trained and assigned to perform the duties currently assigned to the agriculture inspectors, they will have a strong case to have their pay increased to that of the agriculture inspectors. This would eliminate any further savings and would actually result in increased costs to the State.

The Connecticut State Grange and The Association of Connecticut Fairs, Inc. urge the General Assembly to repeal the merger between the Department of Consumer Protection and the Department of Agriculture. Connecticut's agriculture industry contributes $2 billion annually to our local economy. It deserves to have its own agency within the framework of Connecticut's government with adequate funds and staff to adequately fulfill its statutory responsibilities to protect and promote Connecticut agriculture.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Gordon F. Gibson
Legislative Director
Connecticut State Grange
Legislative Chair and Director
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(H) 20

Ned Ellis
Maple Leaf Farm
768 Gilead St
Hebron CT 06248

3/5/04

Dear Chairman Williams, Vice Chair Widlitz and members of the Environment Committee -

My Name is Ned Ellis and I am from Hebron, Ct.

I am a dairy farmer and conservationist, believing that we have been given land, and must be good stewards of the same. We have been farmers in Hebron since the early 1700's and at our present location for over 100 yrs.

I am speaking to encourage you to keep the Dept of Ag, in tact, as a stand alone department!

Maple Leaf Farm currently maintains a herd of 380 animals with 200 of them milking. We have 5 full time employees along with several part timers. We own 630 A and rent another 150 A for crops.

In 2003, we sold to the state, 240 beautiful acres which will perpetually be in farmland and open space, producing clean air, food, and providing breathtaking vistas for people to enjoy. With money from the sale we we able to purchase 170 A of additional land which are vital to our continued operation, and which were already preserved in the Farmland Preservation Program.

I realize many budget cuts have been made to try to come up with a balanced budget - THAT IS GOOD! Many new initiatives, and billions

of dollars have been spent to reinvigorate our cities, bringing tourists, conventions, etc, and making our residents feel comfortable about moving back to the city. Cities can be rebuilt, but once a farm is covered with blacktop and houses, it will NEVER be restored as a productive unit.

The Dept. of Agriculture is small, but by merging it with the Dept. of Consumer Protection, the monetary saving is nominal compared to losing the identity of agricultural businesses in our state! They have added 2.2 billion dollars annually to our economy

There is a huge demand for locally grown products... Nurseries, tree farms, dairy farms, poultry, crops and vineyards... these all add something to the states beauty!

Working lands help purify our air and add clean water to our precious aquifers. Working farms allow educational opportunities for our school children (and their parents) who can experience WHERE food comes from (nutrition education has become very important in the learning process). Conservation programs using federal funds need to be collaborated with state staffing.

Most importantly, without a Commission of Agriculture who understands and can stand up for the remaining state agricultural body, and who can knowledgably rally and deal with adverse situations which may arise (i.e. avian influenza - millions of birds were saved; "mad cow disease", keeping the public informed, the aphid problems), agriculture's future and great contribution to our state is in very serious jeopardy!

A stand alone Dept of Ag will insure that State Leadership will continue to focus on the evolving needs of the agricultural community as well as recognize the loss of farms as a threat to their way of life.

We have many top notch and innovative farms in Connecticut, both in aqua and agriculture.

LETS HELP KEEP IT THAT WAY!

I encourage you to use whatever influence you have, to keep the Department of Agriculture - A stand alone department with its own commissioner!

Thank You For Your Time

I'd be glad to answer any questions.

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MAEGOG FARMS LLC

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March 5, 2004

REF: HB 5585 AAC Continuation of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture as a stand alone entity.

SUBJECT: Written testimony in support of the reference bill to be presented at the March 5, 2004 hearing on this bill.

I am Stuart Gadbois and along with my son, John, operate a dairy farm in Salem, Connecticut where we milk 200 cows and crop 200 acres. Agriculture is a big and important business in Connecticut but is also a unique business with special needs and special problems. Agriculture needs an advocate in a separate Department of Agriculture to supply these needs and deal with these special problems. Historically, when one department is merged into another, the merged-into department ceases to exist over a short period of time. An example of this is the Department of Aging. It is important to the agriculture industry in Connecticut that this not be allowed to happen.

Dairy farms use 70% of the cropland in Connecticut. These farms maintain, at no cost to taxpayers, a lot of open space which adds to the quality of life for all Connecticut residents. One program that is administered by the Department of Agriculture, is the Farmland Preservation Program. This program is essential to all of agriculture to maintain cropland.

The budget savings resulting from the merger of the Department of Agriculture with the Department of Consumer Protection are non-existent, but the impact on the effectiveness of the Department of Agriculture would be devastating.

I encourage you to support HB 5585 so that agriculture can remain vibrant in Connecticut.

Sincerely yours,

Stuart E. Gadbois

(12)

000764

KOFKOFF EGG FARMS

LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

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Environment Committee Public Hearing
Friday, March 5, 2004

Testimony
Of
Kofkoff Egg Farm

In support of

HB 5585 An Act Continuing the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Protection as Separate Agencies.

My name is Hugh Mathews and I am a Manager of Corporate Planning of Moark LLC, a 50 year old company located in Bozrah, which is the parent company of Southern New England Egg Farms, New England Egg Farms, Kofkoff Feed, Inc., and Kofkoff Egg Farms. Moark is owned and operated by the Land 'O Lakes Company, which is an agricultural and consumer foods company based in St. Paul, Minnesota. We are the largest egg producers in New England, doing $100 million annually in business, with over 300 employees. I would like to take this opportunity to speak in support of maintaining the Department of Agriculture as it currently operates, and not merge it into the Department of Consumer Protection. As someone who has worked in the agricultural business for 32 years, 16 year of that in Connecticut, I can honestly say that the Department of Agriculture plays an important and necessary role in maintaining agriculture in Connecticut.

Recently, at Kofkoff, we had an outbreak of avian flu. Were it not for the swift and steady action of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to urge the USDA to adopt Connecticut's recommendation for a vaccination program, rather than the depopulation program that the USDA recommends, our business in Connecticut would have been completely wiped out. The direct cost to the state (cash payments required under state and federal law) of implementing a depopulation program would have been in excess of $65 million. The indirect costs to the state would have been hundreds of millions of dollars.

There is interconnectedness between our business, a prime agricultural business, and the entire economy of eastern Connecticut. Quite frankly, without a Department of Agriculture, and an experienced farmer like Bruce Gresczyk as Commissioner, the

adverse economic impact of the USDA's directed solutions to our problems would have been felt throughout Connecticut. Mr. Gresczyk opposed the Federal Governments edict to depopulate our flocks, saving the tax payers of Connecticut millions of dollars, and recommended a vaccination program which has the potential to save the US billions of dollars.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture performs many crucial functions:

- Milk inspection and regulation.
- Licensing functions.
- Farmland preservation.
- Investigation and prosecution of animal cruelty, which includes oversight of every municipal dog pound in the state.
- Marketing and sales of farm products.
- Intervention and advocacy on behalf of farmers and agricultural business on land use and regulatory issues.
- Aquaculture advocacy and regulation.
- Office of State Veterinarian.

The Department of Agriculture is essential to those of us in the agricultural business. The collective experience and institutional knowledge that is found within the Department is vital to this industry. The fact is that the Department, through its many functions, generates far more tax revenue and economic activity than it costs. It's an investment that should be preserved and expanded, not consolidated with another agency.

(65)

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, Inc.
510 Pigeon Hill Road • Windsor, CT 06095-2141
(860) 298-4400 • Fax (860) 298-4408 • www.cfba.org

HB 5585 AN ACT CONTINUING THE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION AS SEPARATE AGENCIES
March 5, 2004

Senator Williams, Representative Widlitz and members of the Environment Committee. My name is Randolph Blackmer and I am President of Connecticut Farm Bureau. We would like to be on record as strongly supporting HB 5585.

What do farmers do for the state of Connecticut
Three years ago, Farm Bureau began a strategic planning process and in the course of developing a strategic plan, surveyed and had in-depth conversations with our members on the future of agriculture in Connecticut. Farmers identified themselves as business people who:

- Control sprawl in their communities by maintaining working open space
- Provide economic stability to rural communities through farm product sales
- Provide balance to town budgets by requiring lower cost of services
- Supply up to 21% of the food utilized by Connecticut's citizens
- Produce plants and flowers which are marketed throughout the east coast
- Maintain and improve environmental quality with agricultural best management practices

Farmers feel one of the most pressing issues facing agriculture in our state is trying to enhance and strengthen a stand alone Department of Agriculture.
When asked to expand on that, the resounding answer was all agriculturally oriented functions must come back to the agency and make it more efficient and effective. Farmers want to work with trained, experienced agricultural professionals in an agency which knows our industry. The Department of Ag needs its own Commissioner which will enable the agency to better communicate agricultures unique position to the administration, other agencies, legislators and other key leaders. Farmers said the functions of a Department of Agriculture should include:

- Marketing and business enhancement, creating value added marketing opportunities
- Access to innovative technology for all sectors of the industry
- Increase in-state food production capacity
- Inspection and regulation of plant products, including invasive plants
- Biosecurity and animal health regulation
- Food safety and inspection
- Pesticide regulation
- Diversification and risk management
- Preservation of working farmland and the related benefits to open space
- Promotion of conservation practices on private land and in our communities
- Forestry, fisheries and wildlife

Current situation
At this time farmers spend time bouncing from one agency to another trying to find information on services and regulations. The agencies where agricultural functions have been assigned include the Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Experiment Station, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Consumer Protection, Department of Public Health, Department of Revenue Services, Department of Motor Vehicles and Department of Labor. With all these agencies attempting to address agricultural interests and carry out regulations, no purpose is served, nor is it efficient or effective. All it accomplishes is increasing the frustration of trying to do business in Connecticut.

In seeking to find resolution to the budget during the legislature's special session this summer, legislative leadership and the Governor agreed to eliminate the Department of Agriculture and merge it with the Department of Consumer Protection. This will be effective at the beginning of the next fiscal year. It is proposed to save $500,000 per year, with the savings being seen in combining some administrative positions, and moving the agency back to a state owned office building. *All of this can be done without elimination and merging departments.*

Best possible solution
This elimination and merger will very effectively reduce agriculture's political and economic visibility as Connecticut's policymakers legislate and regulate farm issues. With less then 2% of the state population actively engaged in farming, this weakens the role agriculture plays in our state. Agriculture is multifunctional and plays an important part in our communities. Did you drive by working open space on your way to Hartford? Did you buy flowers on Valentines day? Did you want to get outside this weekend and long for warm spring weather so you can go outside in the yard? More important, have you had anything to eat today?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, chances are pretty strong that Connecticut agriculture means something to you. Please support HB 5585, keep agriculture growing in Connecticut.

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END HUNGER CONNECTICUT! Inc.

102 HUNGERFORD STREET, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-4626 ¥ PHONE: 860 560-2100 ¥ FAX: 860 560-21

HB 5585: An Act Continuing the Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Protection as Separate Agencies

Environment Committee
March 5, 2004

Senator Williams, Representative Widlitz and members of the Environment Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan and I am the Executive Director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide anti-hunger and food security coalition with over 1,000 members, many of whom are the state's emergency food providers. I am here today to speak in favor of HB 5585, An Act Continuing the Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Protection as Separate Agencies.

Currently, Connecticut's Department of Agriculture organizes the 65 Farmer's Markets in the state. These Farmer's Markets are often the one place where urban dwellers can get fresh produce and local products. Recipients of WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Coupons and Senior Nutrition Farmer's Markets coupons redeem them at the local market to buy fresh locally grown produce thereby increasing the nutrient value of their diet. The Department of Social Services is looking into using the Food Stamp Program at the markets. The Farmer's Market creates a great synergy between local farmers and low-income residents in cities who may not be able to access fresh produce unless it is at the Farmer's Market.

The Department of Agriculture has a long history with and works for those farmers in business planning and developing workable solutions to specific issues. The Department of Consumer Protection has a very different mission, and while the two departments should work together it is not advisable that they are one entity. On the Department of Agriculture's web site is a link to the Connecticut Grown campaign, which states very well how the Department works as a partner with farmers.

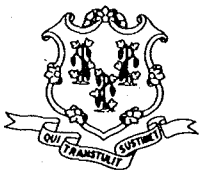
> The Connecticut Grown Program is an ongoing initiative to increase the demand for Connecticut products from within **and** from outside the region, increase sales and value of Connecticut products, increase farm product profitability, increase farm numbers and production to ensure equilibrium supply and demand, diversification of farm products and farm use capabilities, increase visibility of Connecticut products via the "Connecticut Grown Logo", and to improve and provide quality assurance and educate the consumer "at large".

On the Department of Consumer Protection web site under "US Food and Drug Administration and Food Manufacturers Registration" is information on regulations regarding bioterrorism and food safety of imported foods. The focus is entirely different, as it should be. One is about

creating and marketing locally grown accessible food as well as a resource for our local agribusinesses and the other is about creating safeguards for food regulation. They both have their place; it just does not make sense for them to be combined.

Our farmers give away a million tons of food to emergency food sites every year. It is gratefully accepted and used. Our local farmers are the link to our rich agricultural heritage and fill a need for those who may not have access to fresh foods at all times. Please continue to maintain the Department of Agriculture separate from the Department of Consumer Protection – they have very different roles in the state, and our low-income residents need the continuation of local farms as distinct business entities that are assisted by professionals in their field.

Thank you.



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

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DEPUTY SPEAKER

MEMBER
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SCREENING COMMITTEE - CO-CHAIR

Good Morning Chairman Williams, Chairman Widlitz and Members of the Environment Committee. For the record, I am State Representative Mary Fritz of the 90th Assembly District, serving the people of Wallingford and Cheshire. I am here before you to support Raised Bill # 5585 which makes the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Consumer Protection separate departments.

It greatly troubles me that every few years Agriculture becomes a target to save money for the state. Several years ago it was the Agricultural Experiment Station, the National Authority on Lime Disease and West Nile Virus. Frankly, this made no sense to most of the legislature and this budget cut bit the dust.

Now here we go again! Saving money at the expense of agriculture by merging with the Department of Consumer Protection. Actually, the money issue disappeared once the Department of Agriculture moved to the State Office Building because now the state is no longer paying a lease at $13,640 a month. (Formally, it was $18,935 a month)

My growers, my farmers, my gentleman and women farmers depend on the Department of Agriculture for advise and help. Did anyone really believe that when Avian flu broke out, I believe in Eastern Connecticut, that the Department of Consumer Protection could have handled it. I really hope not.

Agriculture is a $2 billion industry in the State of Connecticut. The people who generate these dollars deserve the respect and the hard work these dollars represent. I have said this many times. We all love and praise our state for its beauty, its open space, and its hills and valleys. We all talk about the country in Connecticut who are the people who have maintained and allowed

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these things to survive? It is the people who work in Agriculture. Before there were open space grants, who kept open space for the rest of us? It was and is the people who work in agriculture.

For all our sakes please make sure that the Department of Agriculture survives as its own Department.