

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

**SA 14-3**

SB313

House	4157-4163	7
Senate	491-493, 625-627	6
<u>Environment</u>	<u>902-909, 1126-1133</u>	<u>16</u>
		<b>29</b>

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**CONNECTICUT  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS  
2014**

**VOL.57  
PART 13  
4098 – 4450**

THE CLERK:

On page 16, Calendar 327, favorable report of the joint standing committee on Environment, AN ACT CONCERNING PARTICIPATION IN WIC AND SENIOR NUTRITION FARMERS' MARKET PROGRAMS BY CERTAIN NONPROFIT FARMERS.

SB 313

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The distinguished Chair of the Environment Committee, Representative Gentile. You have the floor, madam.

REP. GENTILE (104th):

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move for acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill in concurrence with the Senate.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question is on acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

Will you remark? In concurrence with the Senate. Will you remark, madam?

REP. GENTILE (104th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, this bill establishes a two-year pilot program that will allow up to three nonprofit farmers to participate as

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vendors in the Women Infants and Children's Program,  
better known as WIC and the Senior Nutrition Programs.

The Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture  
will set the parameters of the program and will  
subsequently submit a report of the results of the  
pilot program to the Environment Committee, and I urge  
passage.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, madam.

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

Representative Shaban.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of background  
questions through you, if I may.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, sir, as long as you don't go out  
into the aisle with your microphone.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

I will stay put.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

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Through you, Mr. Speaker, for the background information for all of us, anyway, what is the WIC Program? Through you, madam?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Gentile.

REP. GENTILE (104th):

Yes, through you, Mr. Speaker, again, it is known as the Women, Infants and Children Program and it provides nutritional items to those individuals.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Shaban.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And through you, frankly, I don't remember from the public testimony, why are we limiting this to three? Was there a reason for that? Through you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Gentile.

REP. GENTILE (104th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, that was what was requested.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Shaban.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not profit farmers.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, what are nonprofit, compared to a for profit farmer, again, I don't recall testimony on this. For the background of the Chamber, what is a not profit farmer? Through you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Gentile.

REP. GENTILE (104th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if that is defined in statute or not, but I would assume it would be one that would invest any money back into the farm.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Shaban.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the gentle woman for her responses. Yeah, I don't think it is either. It's one of those questions, I guess that kind of pops out, why limit it to nonprofit farmers, but I do recall that this was a request by the Commissioner. I know it was favorably received by the Environment Committee. It seems to make a little bit of sense, so with that, I urge my colleagues' support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

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

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER: (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Good afternoon, sir.

REP. MINER (66th):

I rise in support of the bill. As I recall  
testimony and it may have been that it involved food,  
so I was locked on like a laser. It had to do, I  
think, with a couple of nonprofit farmers' markets  
also, and I think their argument was that when you get  
to some of the larger communities in Connecticut, it's  
very hard to get farmers to come in and it's very hard  
to get people good, nutritional food under the WIC  
Program.

So in Litchfield, we have the benefit of a  
Farmer's Market and they take those certificates, and  
I think the testimony we heard was that's not always  
the case in some of our more urban centers.

And so I think the bill is a good bill. I think it does provide good, quality food, locally grown, mostly, I think, to our residents of the state and I would urge support.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

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

If not, staff and guests to the well of the House. Members take your seats. The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by roll. Will members please return to the chamber immediately.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Have all the members voted? Will members please check the board to make sure your vote is properly cast.

If all the members have voted, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally. The Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

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In concurrence, Senate Bill 313.

Total number voting	138
Necessary for passage	70
Those voting Yea	138
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	13

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The bill passes in concurrence with the Senate,

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 443.

THE CLERK:

On page 26, Calendar 443, favorable report of the joint standing committee on General Law, Substitute Senate Bill 299, AN ACT CONCERNING HEATING FUEL DELIVERY FEES, CHARGES AND SURCHARGES AND PREPAID GUARANTEED HEATING FUEL PRICE PLANS.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Altobello.

REP. ALTOBELLO (82nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move for acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill in concurrence with the Senate.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

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**CONNECTICUT  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
SENATE**

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Thank you, Madam President. I thank the gentleman for his answers.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark further? Will you remark further? Seeing none, all in favor of this Amendment, please say aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed? The Amendment passes. Senator Doyle.

SENATOR DOYLE:

Yes, thank you, Madam President. If there's no objection, I move this bill to the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir. Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Page 15, Calendar 171, Senate Bill Number 313 AN ACT CONCERNING PARTICIPATION IN WIC AND SENIOR NUTRITION FARMERS' MARKET PROGRAMS BY CERTAIN NONPROFIT FARMERS. Favorable Report of the Committee on Environment.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER:

Thank you, Madam President. I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of this bill.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on acceptance and passage. Will you remark, sir?

SENATOR MEYER:

Yes. Colleagues, this bill establishes primarily for the benefit of Waterbury, a two-year pilot program, which will allow nonprofit farmers to participate in farmers' markets where they will be able to sell fresh, nutritious food at lower prices to women, infants and children program, the Women, Infant and Children Program, the WIC program, which Senator Chapin just informed me is a statewide program. I didn't know that.

And also, to another program in the City of Waterbury and that's the Senior Nutrition Program, so it's a pilot program. It's three nonprofit farmers will be able to participate and it received very strong support from the residents of Waterbury at the public hearing, so I do move it with enthusiasm.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark? Senator Chapin.

SENATOR CHAPIN:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I also rise in support of the bill before us. As the good Senator mentioned, the testimony we heard at the public hearing was very compelling and it's certainly worthwhile to implement this as a two-year program to see how it works in the, presumably in the City of Waterbury and I would certainly encourage my colleagues in the circle to support it today. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark further? Will you remark further? Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER:

If no objection, may it please go on the Consent Calendar?

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered. Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Page 16, Calendar 179, Substitute for Senate Bill Number 376 AN ACT CONCERNING NONPROFIT GOLF TOURNAMENT ALCOHOLIC LIQUOR PERMITS. Favorable Report of the Committee on General Law.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Doyle.

SENATOR DOYLE:

Good afternoon, again, Madam President. I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on acceptance and passage. Will you remark, sir?

SENATOR DOYLE:

Yes. Thank you, Madam President. This bill does a, makes a minor technical change to permit a tax to qualify to provide alcohol services. It changes from one, the 501C-3 to 501C-4 tax qualification, Madam President. I move its adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark? Will you remark? Will you remark?  
Seeing none, Senator Doyle.

SENATOR DOYLE:

Yes, thank you, Madam President. Without objection, I move it to the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Consent Calendar Number 2. On Page 6, Calendar 63,  
Senate Bill Number 19.

On Page 7, Calendar 64, Senate Bill Number 20.

Also on Page 7, Calendar 71, Senate Bill 241.

On Page 12, Calendar 156, Senate Bill Number 207.

And on Page 14, Calendar 165, Senate Bill 115.

Page 15, Calendar 171, Senate Bill Number 313.

And on Page 16, Calendar 179, Senate Bill Number 376.

Also on Page 16, Calendar 182, Senate Bill Number 101.

And on Page 17, Calendar 184, Senate Bill Number 247.

Page 19, Calendar 200, Senate Bill 205.

On Page 20, Calendar 201, Senate Bill Number 82.

On Page 35, Calendar 69, Senate Bill 63.

Calendar 75, Senate Bill 112.

And Calendar 77, Senate Bill Number 364.

On Page 36, Calendar 88, Senate Bill 100.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. When the Clerk was reading those items, wanted to inquire on the status of Calendar Page 7, Calendar 72, Senate Bill 92.

THE CLERK:

And I should have read, Page 7, Calendar 72, Senate Bill 92.

THE CHAIR:

That's also on the Consent Calendar. Is that correct?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, could I ask you about Page 8. I don't know if there has been marked, which bill, Page 8, Calendar 76, 113? Did you say that?

THE CLERK:

Yes, Madam President. It is on the Second Consent Calendar for today.

THE CHAIR:

And Page 9, Calendar 84, Bill 201. Was that read, sir?

THE CLERK:

Yes, ma'am.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you very much. At this time, Mr. Clerk, will you please call for a Roll Call Vote on the Consent Calendar. The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

Immediate Roll Call is ordered in the Senate.

Immediate Roll Call on the Second Consent Calendar for today is ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, all members voted, the machine will be closed. I ask the Clerk to please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On the Second Consent Calendar for today.

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 passes. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, Madam President. Thank you. Madam President, would move that all of the bills referred to various Committees earlier in the Session, that those bills be immediately transmitted to the Committees to which they were referred.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you. Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, if the Clerk would now call an item that was marked passed temporarily earlier, and that was Calendar Page 9, Calendar 108, Senate Bill 36.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Page 9, Calendar 108, Substitute for Senate Bill Number 36 AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE. Favorable Report of the Committee on Public Health, and there are amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening, Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

**JOINT  
STANDING  
COMMITTEE  
HEARINGS**

**ENVIRONMENT  
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**2014**

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Representative Miner.  
Any other questions or comments? Thank you  
both. Thank you, Representative Hwang.  
Appreciate it.

REP. HWANG: Thank you.

REP. MINER: Our next witness is Senator Hartley,  
the great senator from Waterbury.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Good afternoon, Chairman Meyer,  
and to all the members of the Environment  
Committee. I cannot compete with Teddy, but  
maybe I can get you all a double shot of  
espresso on this Friday afternoon.

I am here with Susan Pronovost, who is the  
director of the Brass City Harvest in the city  
of Waterbury. And for the record, my name is  
Joan Hartley from the 15th Senatorial District  
and I'm here to testify in support of Raised  
Bill 313, which is an ACT CONCERNING  
PARTICIPATION IN THE WIC AND THE SENIOR  
NUTRITION FARMER'S MARKET BY CERTAIN NOT FOR  
PROFIT FARMERS.

Let me just briefly say that the Brass City  
Harvest is an urban farming 501(c)(3). They  
serve a targeted population of low-income  
households, elderly folks in the city of  
Waterbury, and medically specially clients.

They operate a seasonal farmer's market from --  
correct me here Susan if I'm wrong, from July  
to September or October -- July to October in  
the heart of the city in the downtown green,  
and a year-round indoor farmer's market, as  
well as a mobile farmer's market, which goes to  
all of our senior centers in town.

In addition to that, they run a program, which is very unique, called Food for Life, and that basically works at one of our hospitals now and is soon to go to the other hospitals, and it works with diabetic and HIV clients to get them, essentially, fresh food and vegetables, teach them dietary nutritional good health.

And -- and also that program, it works in tandem with the YMCA and you get a membership to the YMCA and they work with monitoring of blood glucose, blood levels, heart issues, and so forth.

So it is a -- it's very unique. But we're here today to basically talk about Senate Bill 313, which essentially asks to pilot a program with the Commissioner of Agriculture so as to authorize such not for profit farmers to engage in cooperative retail marketing of Connecticut-grown farmer goods and products, and to be allowed to participate as a vendor in the WIC and the senior nutrition program.

And that is -- that would exponentially help to get more fruits and vegetables to the populations that we are so desperately trying to serve.

So in the interest of time and the long day that you've had so far, and perhaps will have for several more hours, I would like to, with the indulgence of the Chair and the Committee members, defer to Susan, who is -- Susan Pronovost, who is the director of the Brass City Harvest.

She, by the way, is the maestro, has leveraged dollars, created things from absolutely nothing. I know if I give her a nickel, I will get \$500 back in exchange. Yes, Sue.

SUSAN PRONOVOST: Thank you. Good afternoon. This bill is simply a culmination of two years' worth of work and trying to institute a pilot program. We made discussions with the Department of Agriculture and Brass City Harvest. As an urban non-farmer, we find the statutory laws fail to keep pace with the changing face of the agriculture as non-profit farmers are rising to the challenge of providing locally grown food to food-insecure populations in all of our cities.

Statutes have failed to keep pace with the state's growing economic disparity, poverty rates, and it's failed to keep pace with the food deserts that exist in virtually all of our communities.

We understand the Connecticut Department of Agriculture has some fears that a pilot program might enable a non-profit farmer to make a profit from the acceptance of the coupons for the WIC and senior nutrition programs, which is untrue. Brass City Harvest, like any other small customer, would purchase produce from a Connecticut farmer at a tiered rate that is slightly under a farmer's retail consumer price point.

When one adds in the cost of transportation, personnel, utilities, et cetera, we are into our own operating capital. There's no profit.

The Department of Agriculture has also had concerns that this would fly in the face of federal law and I would point to the Arcadia Center For Sustainable Food and Agriculture in Washington D.C., who, on their website, clearly state that they accept these coupons.

We at Brass City Harvest think the personnel of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, and

most especially Commissioner Steven Reviczky, are second to none in regard to their dedication to Connecticut's agricultural industry. We share their dedication to the Connecticut-grown brand.

Brass City Harvest markets (inaudible), especially at this time of the year, by what is available in Connecticut-grown -- farmers and dairymen. We ask our Legislature equally, please stand behind us as we stand behind the Connecticut-grown brand to help us serve the disadvantaged residents of our communities and expand the consumption of Connecticut-grown produce.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Susan. Any questions?  
Yes, Representative -- Representative.

REP. ZIOBRON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and -- and welcome.

SUSAN PRONOVOST: Thank you.

REP. ZIOBRON: Thank you so much for being here and advocating for this very worthy cause. I just got done reading the bill and I -- and I have a couple of questions. In the bill, it only talks about three non-profit farms. Am I -- am I reading that correctly?

SENATOR HARTLEY: Yes, Representative. You are correct. I don't have numbers lined on my version, but it does say to pilot not more than three. So I think perhaps, in the drafting, the thought was that there may be others out there. I know that we are poised to do this. And so, the -- the hope would be that we would be one.

And as a footnote to the Chairs and -- and members. I just wanted to also thank you for

helping to move us to be able to testify because Susan has brought with her members of the Brass City Harvest group, and they have a bus, and as you know how that goes, the meter - - it's kind of like lawyers. You know, the meter is always running.

But I'd ask them to kind of raise their hand to show that they are in attendance and they are workers, volunteers. They also utilize the market and also a representative from Waterbury Hospital is here, who coordinates that very special Food For Life program.

REP. ZIOBRON: Thank you, Senator. I don't mean to keep your clocks ticking here, but -- but when I was reading the bill, at first I thought this was a -- a statewide program and I was looking for not more than three.

But then, when I went and saw the testimony and I see the testimony is only from Waterbury, I think you've cleared up for me that this is a pilot program that really you have been advocating for and it's your pilot program for one location. That's -- I mean, I know the bill says something else, but that's essentially what's happening here.

So I'm very supportive of that. I just -- again, for me, as a clarification, I just wanted to understand whether it was a statewide concept or one. And I just want to say for all the farmers in my community, go get them so that we can really share this around the state. I think it has a lot of good benefits. So thank you so much for being here.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Representative Ziobron.  
Representative Miller.

REP. PHILIP MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Senator, and thank you for the testimony. At your farmer's markets in the Brass City, do you have the point of sales machine, which allows for a doubling of the sustenance nutrition assistance program?

SUSAN PRONOVOST: We are participants in the Wholesome Wave program. We do do double up. We have also won additional incentive monies through community development block grant programs and part of the philanthropic giving organizations.

REP. PHILIP MILLER: Okay. So this is for the WIC recipients, the women, infant, children --

SUSAN PRONOVOST: These are the -- the season WIC coupon booklets that come out from June to perhaps October 31, as well -- well as the elderly senior coupon booklets. They range from 15 to 30 dollars depending on the annual allocation.

REP. PHILIP MILLER: Okay. And I just want to state for an observation that in Public Health yesterday, Representative Godfrey was explaining to us that in his district, which is actually an inner -- a city part of Danbury, a lot of his constituents face similar issues that we have throughout the state in many of our urban areas with food deserts, where people lack access to good healthy produce. And what they then have to do is they fill their bellies with a lot of empty cheap calories, highly process food and such.

And so, it's in all our best interest that we expand Connecticut-grown as -- as far and into every city and borough and town that we can. Correct?

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hc/gbr ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

March 7, 2014  
1:00 P.M.

SUSAN PRONOVOST: Correct. One third of Waterbury is geographic land mass is -- is within a USDA food desert, as listed on their USDA map.

REP. PHILIP MILLER: Okay. Thank you and good luck.

SUSAN PRONOVOST: Thank you.

SENATOR MEYER: Representative Bowles.

REP. BOWLES: Yes. Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Senator, and thank you for your testimony. I appreciate that. I just want to make note. Interestingly enough, I had this exact conversation probably two months ago at Fiddleheads Cooperative, which is located in New London, serves a largely urban population, somewhat impoverished population in -- in New London, which has the food deserts and -- and accessibility issues.

But they talked to me. The executive director of that program talked to me specifically about trying to see if we couldn't get something done about the WIC program and the acceptance of that.

And so, I really applaud you for this effort. Just -- just to clarify I understand this, gives the potential for three different locations. Correct?

So I -- I would just ask, you know, that I would -- I would love to work, you know, closely with you in terms of trying to see if -  
- if the Department of Ag is willing to pilot this and this legislation passes, is that perhaps New London could be considered as a non-profit food co-op that relies a lot on Connecticut-grown products in -- in the new London County area.

I would appreciate working with you on that.  
Thank you very much. Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: If I might, Mr. Chair. Susan is a great mentor and a great source of information. And really, what we're talking about is the old model always existed that the farmer's market farmers come and set up their station and the - the coupons go directly to the farmer.

However, just think about the logistics of that in a, you know, a 12-month operation. The farmers cannot sit there all day long. And also in a mobile operation. They are not going to follow you around, that you can go physically through the act of handing the voucher to the farmer.

And so, we're talking about a not for profit operation that takes the farmer's goods, maybe has the cost of fuel or, like in the case of the indoor operation, but does that service for the farmer and gets that produce into the community where it's so desperately needed.

REP. BOWLES: And that's what -- exactly what this cooperative does, is they have actually a storefront location and the whole grocery store that they've taken and they have -- it's all locally produced?

How much of the produce is locally produced, the food? So they act as a -- a vendor for -- on behalf of the -- the farmers -- and a lot of organic farmers in the area. Thank you.

SENATOR MEYER: Okay. Thank you both. Sounds like a good program.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MEYER: Our next witness is Terri Eickel.

**JOINT  
STANDING  
COMMITTEE  
HEARINGS**

**ENVIRONMENT  
PART 3  
1066 – 1779**

**2014**

Hartley



73 Hill Street  
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March 5, 2014

Honorable Members of the Environment  
Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly  
Room 3200, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Honorable Members:

I am submitting this written testimony to the Environment Committee in support of the passage of Senate Bill 313. Brass City Harvest, Inc., of Waterbury, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit agricultural [urban farming] and human services organization. Our target client populations in Waterbury are low-income SNAP/WIC households, elderly, and medically special clients (patients of Waterbury Hospital's diabetic and HIV clinics). We serve thousands of our clients through our urban agricultural and farmers' market programs.

We have tried to forge a pilot program with the Connecticut Department of Agriculture for the better part of the last two years that would allow this organization to accept seasonal WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons at our year-round, indoor, CT Grown farmers' market, and our mobile farmers' market program that visits sites that include Waterbury's senior centers, both hospitals, community centers, and public housing projects. Brass City Harvest is a unique entity in that we are both an urban farmer (3 acres) and the market master of CT Grown seasonal, year-round indoor fixed location, and mobile refrigerated farmers' markets in Waterbury. We have been unable to create a situation that would allow a pilot program in Waterbury that would satisfy the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and statutory law.

Senate Bill 313 is our attempt to create a pilot program that will answer the need that exists in Waterbury to put more Connecticut Grown produce on the tables of our most vulnerable citizens. Simply "*handing out*" WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons each summer is not enough in Waterbury. Under the current situation, there is one seasonal "certified" farmers' market that exists on our municipal Green [that is managed by Brass City Harvest] whose hours of operation and location makes it difficult for working mothers receiving WIC to attend or for seniors who have transportation issues to come to that market. The future of this "certified market" is equally in doubt beyond the 2014 season which could leave vulnerable Waterburians with no access to a "certified market" within the geographic borders of the City of Waterbury under current statutory law.

Passage of this bill would give us the opportunity to increase access to fresh, Connecticut Grown food by allowing Brass City Harvest to accept seasonal WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs as payment for produce purchased by clientele as if we were the farmer. In this case, we are essentially the agent for the farmer. This program would bring produce from our network of partner Connecticut farmers to the very doorsteps of those most in need in every urban nook and

cranny of Waterbury through our year-round, indoor market and most especially, our mobile farmers' market van. Many of the locations we serve through our mobile farmers' market program are meccas for the elderly and WIC mothers and their children. *"What better way to increase access to fresh Connecticut Grown food than by meeting the very clients these programs are meant to serve right at their most convenient gathering places?"*

The Statutes of the State of Connecticut that govern the definition of a "farmer", "farmers' markets", "certified farmers' markets" and the entitlement programs that are operated through those certified markets were designed to maintain the integrity of the Connecticut farmer, agricultural industry, and the CT Grown brand. No one has more respect for our farmers or the CT Grown program than we, at Brass City Harvest. However, statutory law has failed to keep pace with the cold facts about food security in the State of Connecticut and the need to enhance the Connecticut Grown branding within burgeoning urban cultures in the State of Connecticut by increasing accessibility and to locally sourced agricultural produce and goods. Statutory law has also failed to keep pace with the changing face of agriculture in our state as more and more urban municipalities are embracing agriculture because they see it as a sustainable way to provide healthy food for its citizenry.

The intention of SB 313 is not to circumvent statutory law, but facilitate a non-binding pilot program that we, as urban farmers, will be able to implement and monitor in conjunction with personnel from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Together, we will "report back to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to agriculture" once this pilot is completed. We stand prepared to work with the Connecticut Department of Agriculture in every way possible and we will agree to constant monitoring as to market rules and Brass City Harvest will always avail proof of our produce sourcing from Connecticut farms and dairies to DOAG personnel [we currently maintain open files of our sourcing available to DOAG personnel for spot inspection at our fixed location]. Our network of partner farmers starts in North Granby and stretches to the shoreline. We make regular pick-ups of produce from all of our farmers; therefore it is very easy for us to maintain appropriate records.

A pilot program would both serve our citizenry and promulgate Connecticut Grown produce for some of our most difficult client populations. Passage of this bill would enable Brass City Harvest – once certified by the Commissioner of Agriculture – to accept WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Coupons at its fixed, year-round location, and all of its mobile farmers' market sites. Our mobile farmers' market program visits all of the senior centers in Waterbury, as well as Waterbury Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital. We have an ongoing partnership with the Waterbury Health Department as a steering committee member of the Greater Waterbury Health Partnership and the Waterbury Healthy Corner Store Initiative.

As stated earlier, Brass City Harvest purchases all of its produce from a network of partner farmers; when we buy more – particularly at off-season times like the winter months – the farmers see increased revenue. Right now our only "certified market" gives two farmers four hours' of business exposure once a week for 18 weeks of the year. Brass City Harvest patronizes these same farmers and many others; thus we give them a greater economic footprint and in some cases, an entirely new market in Waterbury. Our farmers have a strong bond to Brass City Harvest and they appreciate our hard work and a customer who pays them promptly for their goods.

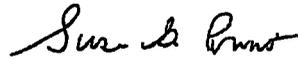
Previous discussions with the Connecticut Department of Agriculture have revealed that one of their concerns is that a pilot program would enable Brass City Harvest to "make a profit" but that is simply not true. Brass City Harvest – like many small customers, purchases goods at a tiered rate that is slightly under a farmers' (or farm stand) retail price. Add in costs for fuel, personnel, utilities, etc. –

figures which are easily documented – our costs are quite significant and certainly make up for the few cents' difference per item based upon our purchase price of Connecticut farm produce. *Our goal is not to make a profit – our mission is to feed people – and we do so, much of the time, at our cost.* There are price points, inspections, and state oversight that force strict adherence to Connecticut Department of Agriculture regulations. *There are no profits in this business – there are only untold thousands of people who need food.* By way of illustration; a newspaper article from the March 5, 2013 edition of the Waterbury Republican-American illustrates a sample of our current mobile farmers' market and nutrition program carried out with medically special populations is attached to this testimony.

As an agricultural non-profit that operates at least two farmers' markets on any given day (fixed location and a mobile market), we are often thrust into the midst of the people we're supposed to serve. Think of your own families; if an elderly relative of yours had to travel downtown, pay for public transportation and perhaps change buses, just to get to the farmers' market only to find out that it's not "certified" and therefore the market can't accept their Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Coupon, two things will happen: 1) the elderly patron will become extremely upset (justifiably so), and 2) the farmers' market and the CT Grown program (and the farmers) will have lost a customer forever because the elderly patron will *never* forget the inconvenience they suffered because of a law that doesn't mean anything to them. The only fact that an elderly patron will expound upon is that he or she has a booklet of coupons that are now worthless to them because they're not going to spend any more time and money to come back downtown on a Thursday or whatever day when the seasonal "certified" market operates for a couple of hours. We've lost a customer, the state has lost a customer, and a farmer has lost a customer. This scenario was repeated more times than I could count during the summer of 2013.

We, at Brass City Harvest, think the personnel of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and most especially, Commissioner Steven Reviczky, are second to none in the United States in regards to their dedication to local agriculture and support of all agricultural industries in our great state. However on the issues concerning implementation of a pilot program for WIC/Senior Nutrition Farmers' Market Programs, we disagree. That disagreement is based upon our somewhat divergent missions but we do hold a common, enduring belief – our love and respect for Connecticut's farmers and dairymen. Brass City Harvest lives and dies based upon the availability of agricultural products produced in the State of Connecticut. We ask our legislators equally, to stand behind us as we endeavor to serve the needs of a disadvantaged community.

Sincerely,



Susan G. Pronovost  
Executive Director

3/5/2014

Republican-American

## Hospital, Brass City Harvest offer vouchers for organic foods

### Healthy partnership for patients

**"THIS IS A REALLY BRILLIANT IDEA TO TEAM UP WITH A FARMERS MARKET AND GIVE THEM SOME INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO PREPARE HEALTHY FOODS. IT'S NOT JUST, 'HERE'S A HEAD OF KALE, GOOD LUCK.'"**

**DR. STEVEN ARONIN**

CHIEF OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES AT WATERBURY HOSPITAL

BY CARRIE MACMILLAN

REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

A self-described junkfood eater most of his life, Joe Mancinone started to eat healthier after he was diagnosed with diabetes two years ago at age 61.

But the Waterbury man, who went on disability in 2006 after a work injury, soon discovered fresh fruits and vegetables cost more than the types of items he was accustomed to buying on his limited income. So when he found out about a new partnership between Brass City Harvest and Waterbury Hospital that awards vouchers to select patients in the hospital's diabetes and infectious disease clinics, Mancinone was elated.

"Having diabetes, I am learning that if I don't do what I need to do, I pay the price. My doctor had warned me that I needed to change my habits, but it's not easy to change. I've been looking really hard at the ingredients of everything I eat. I meet with a nutritionist at the hospital, but if you don't have the money to buy good food, especially the organic stuff I like, why bother talking about it?"

Mancinone said.

Brass City Harvest, a Waterbury-based nonprofit that runs farmers markets in the city and has a mobile market that visits neighborhoods and senior centers, received a grant to kickstart the program with the hospital, which is called Food for Life.

To qualify, participants must belong to one of the hospital's two disease management clinics and be at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty level.

Qualified patients receive vouchers in \$3 increments. A single person can receive up to \$24 a month and a family of five can receive up to \$120 a month.

Vouchers can be redeemed at any Brass City Harvest market, including the seasonal one on the Green and the year-round operation on Field Street.

Brass City Harvest also sets up shop at Waterbury Hospital every Friday morning, and soon will be visiting Saint Mary's Hospital in Waterbury starting Wednesdays, said Susan Pronovost, executive director of Brass City Harvest. Participants receive vouchers on a monthly basis as long as they are in compliance with their medical visits, nutritionist visit and exercise regimen as prescribed by their doctor.

The program, which organizers say is the first of its kind in the region, launched last Friday *See FOOD*, Page 2D



**Waterbury resident Joe Mancinone, left, checks out the Brass City Harvest market at Waterbury Hospital last week. Mancinone is one of 60 patients from the hospital's diabetes and infectious disease clinics participating in a new program that awards vouchers to be used at the market.**

ANDREW HOGAN

**Article Continued Below**

[See FOOD on Page D02](#)

**FOOD: Cooking and eating tutorials begin**

*Continued from 1D*

and continues through December. Pronovost said she is confident the program will come up with more money to cover operating costs and hopeful that it will continue beyond December. The program kicked off with a cooking demonstration by a chef from Morrison Food Service at Waterbury Hospital.

"Seeing that guy cook was wonderful and reminded me of how much I used to cook and got me excited. I went ahead and bought spinach and lettuce and a bag of purple onions and eggs," Mancinone said. "I hadn't seen lettuce that looked that green since I was on a farm."

The Food for Life program began with a \$2,500 grant from Ion Bank Foundation. Since then, other partners have come on board and Waterbury Hospital has come up with its own grants to match those from Brass City Harvest. Altogether, the program has secured about \$7,500, Pronovost said.

The hospital has enrolled 60 patients in the initiative so far. The program also includes a free membership at the Greater Waterbury YMCA. Participants see a nutritionist monthly and a physician will track certain health indicators, such as blood-glucose levels, blood pressure and cholesterol.

"We will be able to see if their outcomes are improving," said Juana Clarke, director of grants at Waterbury Hospital. "Patients will meet with a case manager to get their vouchers every month, and they have to be using them to get the next month's voucher. The Y also sends us a monthly report on gym use. They can meet with a dietitian for any questions on recipes."

**DR. STEVEN ARONIN,**

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chief of infectious diseases at Waterbury Hospital, said the program makes a lot of sense because medical providers often "stop taking care of people once they leave the doctor's office or the hospital."

"We had a home-visit program here a few years ago with residents that was so revealing," Aronin said. "Patients don't throw away their pills. They have bottles and bottles of them. But you open up their fridge and, 'Ohmigod you are diabetic and look at the food in here.' So this is a really brilliant idea to team up with a farmers market and give them some instructions on how to prepare healthy foods. It's not just, 'Here's a head of kale, good luck.'" While the benefits for diabetics is obvious, HIV patients also are helped because the HIV medications commonly lead to high cholesterol and high blood pressure, Aronin said.

"It's basically a fresh fruit and vegetables prescription diet," Pronovost said. "We're trying to reduce their medication load and to get them to eat healthier for life. It's a bit of a behavior modification process."

Cooking demonstrations at the hospital will be given at least quarterly, and perhaps more frequently, Pronovost said.

Dr. Stephen Huot, co-director of the Diabetes Disease Management Clinic at Waterbury Hospital's Chase Outpatient Clinic, applauded the program.

"Access to fresh and affordable food is a particular challenge in urban settings, and the opportunity to include education to empower patients to make healthier food choices is powerful," he said. "These types of community-based programs can have a direct and positive effect for patients where activity and diet are particularly important, such as for people with diabetes."

Contact Carrie MacMillan at [cmacmillan@rep-am.com](mailto:cmacmillan@rep-am.com).



**Pasquale Giannelli, executive chef with Morrison Food Service at Waterbury Hospital, leads a cooking**

<http://republicanamerican.ct.newsmemory.com/?token=1170172428>

3/5/2014

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demonstration at the hospital last week when the Food for Life program between Brass City Harvest and the hospital kicked off.

ANDREW HOGAN

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# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Office of the Commissioner

Steven K. Reviczky  
Commissioner

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**S.B. No. 313 (RAISED) ENVIRONMENT. 'AN ACT CONCERNING PARTICIPATION IN WIC AND SENIOR NUTRITION FARMERS' MARKET PROGRAMS BY CERTAIN NONPROFIT FARMERS'**

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture supports the proposal in S.B. No. 313 (RAISED) ENVIRONMENT. 'AN ACT CONCERNING PARTICIPATION IN WIC AND SENIOR NUTRITION FARMERS' MARKET PROGRAMS BY CERTAIN NONPROFIT FARMERS' to create a small pilot program in which individual non-profit farmers engaged in cooperative retail marketing of Connecticut Grown farm products could participate as vendors in the state's Farmers' Market WIC and Senior Nutrition programs.

The agency emphasizes the need to study such a pilot and collect data over at least two years to measure results, particularly the economic ramifications on for-profit farmers and other farmers' markets participating in the Farmers' Market WIC and Senior Nutrition programs. If the goals of the pilot are accomplished during the study phase without detrimentally affecting other farmers and farmers' markets in the WIC and Senior Nutrition programs, the agency would be better positioned to make a favorable recommendation to expand such a pilot.