

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 26
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
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Co-Chairs Fonfara and Rojas, Ranking Members Witkos and Davis, Vice-Chairs Cassano, Leone, Concepcion and Meskers, and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council in support of **SB 26**, An Act Exempting From The Personal Income Tax Proceeds From The Sale Of Agricultural Land Development Rights To The State.

As the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its 130+ land trusts, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) advocates for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and works to ensure the long-term strength and viability of the land conservation community in Connecticut. A consistent priority on CLCC's annual Conservation Agenda is protecting existing and exploring new tax incentives and exemptions that benefit land conservation, including farmland preservation.

CLCC strongly supports SB 26 which would provide further financial incentive for farmers to take advantage of Connecticut's Farmland Preservation Program (FPP). Established in 1978 and administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, the FPP provides a source of revenue for the state to permanently restrict non-agricultural uses on Connecticut's highest quality farmland, while keeping the farms in private ownership. The program is voluntary and provides farmers with a critical source of revenue to continue to operate their businesses. Placing an agricultural easement on these farms also makes them more affordable for purchase by new and beginning farmers.

The state's long-term goal is to preserve 130,000 acres of farmland. To date, over 46,000 acres have been protected. Connecticut's agricultural industry is an economic driver in terms of food production, jobs, and quality of life. In addition, preservation of the state's highest quality soils can protect biodiversity and absorb and store carbon — removing it from the atmosphere and offsetting the carbon emissions from other activities.

Providing a tax incentive for farmers to preserve their land will help the state reach its farmland preservation goals, bolster our state and local economies, assist in efforts to mitigate against climate change, and keep farmers on the land. To that end, CLCC suggests expanding the application of the tax exemption to all permanent farmland preservation transactions, including sales of development rights to land trusts and municipalities.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments, we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

