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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RB 5383, AN ACT CONCERNING THE FARM VIABILITY MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM AND THE CONNECTICUT FRM LINK PROGRAM

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I am Gordon Gibson of Vernon, Legislative Liaison for the Connecticut State Grange, submitting testimony today in support of Raised Bill 5383, An Act Concerning The Farm Viability Matching Grant Program And The Connecticut Farm Link Program. Connecticut has some of the best farmland in the world but if it is not properly cared for it reverts to brush and forest land within a few years. At the same time there are a number of people who want to start a farm operation today but find the cost of acquiring land by either lease or purchase and the other costs of starting up a farm operation make it impossible for them to start a viable farm operation. The Department of Agriculture has a program to purchase and hold the development rights to farmland so it will not be put to other uses, but there is nothing in the existing program to protect the land from reverting back to nature if it is not actively farmed. It is therefore important that the State protect its investment in the preservation of farmland with programs and services that promote new farmers and make quality farmland available to them.

Raised Bill 5383 would create a program within the Department of Agriculture that would connect people who have farmland they want to sell with people who are seeking land on which they can establish a farm operation, thereby keeping the land in production to help provide locally grown food all the residents of Connecticut. Ever since its creation in 1867 the Grange has supported the family farm as one of the important building blocks of American agriculture. The Connecticut State Grange therefore supports and urges the passage of Raised Bill 5383.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

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