

9 March 2007

Freund's Farm, Inc.
Benjamin and Matthew Freund
324 Norfolk Road
East Canaan, CT 06024

Chairman Finch, Chairman Roy, and members of the Environment Committee:

I am testifying in favor of **Raised Bills 1257 and 1356** to support a long term solution to the dairy farm crisis in Connecticut. My brother Matthew and I own and operate a 240 cow dairy farm in East Canaan, CT. We own 400 acres and rent 400 additional acres. I chair the Connecticut Farm Bureau Dairy Committee.

We have worked diligently since last summer building a consensus among our 5400 Farm Bureau members to support our State's dairy industry. Raised bill 1356 contains all of the criteria supported by our members and adopted at our annual meeting in November. Our resolution set a target price of 17 dollars for all of the milk produced in Connecticut indexed as appropriate according to accepted review.

We support the work of the Milk Regulation Board producing raised bill 1257 establishing a milk handler fee system. We speak with one voice at a critical time as you have heard in testimony over the past several weeks.

Connecticut farmers want a fair price for their milk. Purchased feed costs have increased 35 percent on our farm from 230 dollars a ton a year ago to over 310 dollars a ton this year. Purchased feed makes up 33 percent of our costs. The impact on our farm is 75,000 dollars or 1.50 per cwt or 17.5 cents per gallon. Our federal energy initiatives with ethanol and biodiesel compete directly with our purchased feed inputs. Dairy farms are big consumers of electricity and power fuels. These costs are strangling our survivability as well.

I would just remind you that we are proud stewards of the working landscapes that provide Connecticut consumers with wholesome fresh milk, critical open space and wildlife habitat areas that could all disappear in favor of higher value uses. Your favorable action on these bills would help reestablish our farms as a viable option for these natural resources that characterize Connecticut.

Respectfully submitted,
Benjamin Freund