



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Commissioner



Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

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Appropriations Committee Conservation and Development Subcommittee February 11, 2020

Department of Agriculture Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt Testimony in Support of Governor Lamont's Proposed Budget

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle, and all of the honorable members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the invitation to discuss and review the Department of Agriculture's proposed budget. For the record, I am Bryan Hurlburt, the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and I am testifying in support of the proposed budget.

The largest change in our budget is related to the Hartford Regional Market. If you will recall, section 10 of Public Act 18-154 directed the Department to convey the Hartford Regional Market and its operations to the Capitol Region Development Authority (CRDA). Over the past year, we have been working closely with CRDA to execute this transfer, to ensure a minimal impact on the tenants, the farmers' market vendors, and the consumers who frequent the market. One of the employees has maintained his role at the market, through a Memorandum of Understanding between the two parties, and is accounted for by the increased position count of 53 in the General Fund. The other employees were offered, and have accepted, similar positions in other agencies and have transferred over the past four weeks.

Our role at the market is to accept farmers' market applications, fees, and assign stall spaces to the vendors. We will send CRDA this information and they will be responsible for the operation of the farmers' market. I am comfortable with this role and our ability to execute it within our current resources.

I would also like to highlight the hemp pilot program that was created under Public Act 19-03. Since launching the program in May, we have issued 114 licenses to grow hemp on 470.71 acres. Most hemp was grown in fields, with an average plot size of 1.44 acres; not everyone who registered actually planted hemp.

To increase awareness and educate the farming community, we undertook a significant outreach effort. The Department conducted five educational outreach events across the state in May and June to educate potential growers on the program requirements. These events were held in collaboration with the Department of Consumer Protection, UCONN Extension, and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. On average, more than 70 people attended each of these events. In November and December, we held four listening sessions across the state to hear feedback from the community about the program, challenges, and successes, and solicit



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ideas for ways to improve the program. Later this month, we are co-sponsoring Connecticut's first hemp conference and trade show. The show will be at full capacity with 32 registered vendors, with more on the waiting list, and over 200 individually registered attendees. This demonstrates the high interest in the crop and further encourages the Department to keep working with our partner organizations to facilitate the growth of the industry. It has been a great collaborative effort and it is our goal to make it a profitable venture for farmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight these two points. At this point I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.