

Commerce Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5125

AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO LIVESTOCK PROCESSING FACILITIES IN

Title: THE STATE.

Vote Date: 3/8/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/1/2022

File No.: 32

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Commerce Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

HB-5125 directs the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development to study the issues and economic benefits related to livestock processing facilities in Connecticut. Conducting a study on this would allow policymakers to have a better understanding of livestock processing facilities in the state.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Bryan Hurlburt, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Agriculture: Commissioner Hurlburt places some of the blame for higher meat prices on a lack of adequate processing facilities. "COVID-19 further disrupted an already fragile processing industry in Connecticut." Commissioner Hurlburt references a recent USDA announcement which involves major investments to increase processing capacity and increase competition in the industry in order "to make agricultural markets more accessible and resilient for farmers." But the Commissioner says Connecticut is failing to meet its processing needs. The Department of Agriculture would like to support the Department of Economic and Community Development in its study in order to help come up with solutions to livestock processing issues.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Joe Emenheiser, Professor, UConn Extension Educator: According to Dr. Emenheiser, "an economic development study that explores the opportunities and challenges from all angles (including producers, processors, and consumers) is important to ensure viable

systems.” He says, HB-5125 aligns with many of his College’s initiatives. Dr. Emenheiser sees opportunities for increasing food production in the state and increasing revenue while “fostering health equity” and supporting local businesses.

Joan Nichols, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association: Nichols says there is “an acute shortage of meat and poultry processing facilities in the state.” In order for farmers to have their animals processed under USDA inspection, animals are being sent as far as New York or Vermont and then often having to bring the processed meat back to Connecticut. Producers must also “make appointments months, sometimes a year in advance to be sure the animals will be processed at the appropriate time to fill customer’s orders.” These issues raise costs for farmers and the Connecticut Farm Bureau would like to work with the Department of Economic and Community Development on researching how to tackle these issues.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Ben McSheehy

Date: 3/30/2022