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New Haven
Testimony SB-191 March 2024

I am writing in support of SB-191, An Act Concerning Food Scrap Diversion from The Solid Waste Stream and the Redemption of Out-Of-State Beverage Containers. I am the co-founder and Executive Director of Haven's Harvest, an environmental nonprofit, whose mission is to build community and rescue food waste, one food rescue at a time. It is time that we look wholly and sustainably at the resources at hand. Excess food is often wasted- and yet it can be a resource.

Since 2019, we have recovered 7.1 million pounds of food- primarily in the Greater New Haven area- with smaller projects in New London and in Lower Naugatuck Valley. We use a hyper-local model- most food is transported in 15 minutes or less. The food is shared with daycare centers and senior centers, schools, clinics, faith communities, mutual aid sites and other nonprofits. These partners understand the value of the recovered food for their communities. The food stretches the budgets for individuals, families and the nonprofit partners. They share in our belief that recovered food is a community resource.

Our model is multimodal- reducing climate consequences of food waste and reducing hunger. As a nation, we need to build the infrastructure for food recovery- just as we did decades ago with recycling. With sustainability as the goal- extracting all the energy from products gives us the most value for the products. We can capture that energy from produced food by keeping it in the food system. Having large food producers make agreements with food rescue organizations is good policy.

There are proven Return-on-Investments for food rescue organizations that stretch beyond saving good food from the waste stream and building community by sharing food. As a nation, we waste 40 percent of the food we produce. According to CT DEEP, we are only recovering 2% of the recoverable food in the wastestream in Connecticut. Meanwhile, 17% of Connecticut residents are food insecure, according to Data Haven. Food rescue organizations not only help alleviate food insecurity, but because 80-90 percent of the food we rescue is produce and nutritious prepared food, we are helping to ease food nutrition anxiety as well. We need the food that is now being tossed into the waste stream as being inedible. It's still quite edible.

The cost of climate change is also measurable. Extreme weather, fueled by climate change, has cost the US \$165 billion in 2022 alone. Add the cost of extreme weather to the cost of healthcare costs for the food insecure (who suffer higher levels of hypertension and diabetes due to lack of nutrient-rich foods) and we're looking at a whopping figure that we could decrease if we handled our food waste more responsibly.

Food rescue organizations such as Haven's Harvest are already scaling up to rescue more, regular food from the organizations who are currently dumping it. Please support SB-191- it is good policy for our state.

Thank you.