

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6241

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING AGRITOURISM.

Vote Date: 3/24/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/17/2025

File No.: 645

Disclaimer: *The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

C0-Sponsors of Bill:

Rep. Jamie S. Foster, 57th Dist.

Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121st Dist.

Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st Dist.

Rep. Savet Constantine, 42nd Dist.

Rep. Jane M. Garibay, 60th Dist.

Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th Dist.

Rep. Nicholas Menapace, 37th Dist.

Rep. Michael D. Quinn 82nd Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

To decrease the number of frivolous lawsuits that create problems for farmers, increase premiums and discourage insurance companies from writing policies.

Substitute Language LCO 6799 The substitute language replaces the underlying bill with similar provisions. In doing so, it (1) changed definitions, (2) generally replaced references to "harm" with "personal injury and property damage" and (3) removed a requirement the agritourism providers post signs warning of known dangerous conditions

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Tracey McDougall, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports H.B. 6241 because many farmers in Connecticut are opening their farms to Agri-tourism to generate additional sources of income for their family run farms but there are many inherent risks associated with visiting a farm. Most Agri-tourism participants understand how to navigate the farms and our members also understand that they need adequate insurance coverage. Unfortunately, there are unfounded lawsuits that

can impact insurance premium costs and disincentivize the writing of Agritourism coverage. Right now, there only two insurance carriers that will write farm insurance in Connecticut.

Many farmers provided testimony in Support of H.B. 6241

Connecticut is the only state in the Northeast that does not provide liability shielding for its agricultural sector, which is essential, because so many farmers are turning to agri-tourism to sustain their operations. There are inherent risks that visitors may encounter on farms and farmers try to warn visitors of some of the risks. HB 6241 is crucial in mitigating frivolous lawsuits that can adversely affect farmers insurance premiums and overall viability. Testimony to this effect was submitted by the following:

Greg Bennett, Owner, Lost Acres Orchard
Keith B. Bishop, President, Bishop's Orchard
David Buck, Owner, Guardians Farm
John Cavanna, Owner, Cavanna Farm
William C. Collins, Owner, Fair Weather Growers
Daryl DeCarli, Owner, DeCarli Farm
William Hill, Owner, Warrup Farm
James R. Lyman, Lyman Farms and Lyman Agency
Mark Murdoch, Owner, Worthington Vineyards
Jeff Rogers, Vice President, Rogers Orchards
Neviana Zhgaba. Co-owner, Aquila' Nest Vinyards

Samuel S. Gold, Executive Director, The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG)

The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) supports H.B. 6241 because many farms are employing agritourism to stay in business but because of the nature of working farms, there are safety risks for visitors from machinery and farm conditions. The proposed bill would protect farmers from liability caused by accidental injuries but, pivotally, not negligence or malice. This protection will help keep more farms in business without fears of destructive lawsuits.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Judy Ganswindt

Date: April 5, 2025