

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1497

AN ACT CONCERNING PROGRAMMING AT THE DEPARTMENT OF

Title: AGRICULTURE.

Vote Date: 3/24/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/17/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To make several key improvements for services and access provided by the Department of Agriculture by expanding state veterinarian support, modernize fertilizer and soil amendment registration, updated dog tag cost structure and year-round agricultural transportation.

Substitute Language LCO 6804 Removes Section 5, which would have made the annual harvest season for vehicles transporting agriculture products year-round. It also made changes to section 1 to specify that any appointment of a veterinarian to exercise the duties of the state veterinarian is to be within existing resources and for a period of up to 2 months.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Bryan Hurlburt, Commissioner, CT Department of Agriculture

Commissioner Hurlburt supports SB 1497 to allow the State Veterinarian to temporarily designate additional veterinarians to address instances where additional support has been needed to address animal and human public health concerns such as the recent in-state cases of Avian Influenza or Equine Encephalitis. The Department supports Section 2 & 3 registration fees. Section 4 amends the cost per dog tag furnished to the town from 5 cents to the actual cost for procurement and distribution of the tags and Section 5 establishing a harvest season in Connecticut which would allow transporters to take advantage of the agricultural exemption to the hours of service and electronic logging device restrictions for the transportation of agricultural commodities within a 150-mile radius of the source of commodities.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Tracy McDougall, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau

Connecticut Farm Bureau supports SB1497 because it would establish a year-round harvest season for the transportation of agricultural products. New York and Massachusetts have also passed similar legislation. This bill would exempt haulers of agricultural products from hours-of-service rules when hauling products from the farm to a location within 150 air-miles of the source. This will help with faster delivery of perishable products to customers and markets.

Keith Bishop, President of Bishop's Orchards

Mr. Bishop supports SB1497 because of the improvements that will directly benefit the Connecticut agricultural community. Designating multiple veterinarians to assist the State Veterinarian. Streamlining operations and reducing administrative burdens to ensure integrity of fertilizer. Updating the cost structure for dog tags and changing to year-round agricultural transportation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Antoinette Chick Spinelli and Mark Bernacki, Co-Chairs Connecticut Town Clerks Association

CTCA opposes Section 4 of SB1497. Their concerns are the implementation date of "effective on passage". Town Clerks issue licenses in the month of June, and request an implementation date of October 1, 2025, and the cost of tags would increase from \$.05 to an undetermined cost. Town Clerks need a specific cost as they must start their fiscal year budget requests in December or January. All the costs to processing dog licenses far exceed the \$1.00 Clerks received.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, COST

COST opposes Section 4 of SB 1497. Municipalities have concerns with the effective date upon passage, the undetermined amount for procuring and distributing dog licensing tags and that the cost of processing the licenses has increased and they are only permitted to retain \$1.00.

Reported by: Judy Ganswindt

Date: April 2, 2025