

Good morning members of the House Agriculture, Food Resiliency and Forestry committee, my name is Alex Thibault. I am a fifth-generation dairy farmer in the town of Colchester. Thank you for giving me the time to speak in favor of S 45- Right to Farm bill on behalf of many members of the farming industry, and also the greater community.

We have been farming in the town of Colchester since 1917 when my great great Grandfather purchased the farm. Now nearly 108 years later through great integrity we have adapted to the necessary changes in farming practices needed to remain sustainable on a business level and most importantly, making the change to preserve to protect our environment. Without implementing the required agricultural practices, we would not be able to continue to do what we love to do and an unhealthy environment would only lead us to future failures. With that being said, the ag industry is the backbone of our state's economy and we have seen a great deal of change through the years. One of those changes unfortunately has been the encroachment of residential and commercial development. Our farm being in Colchester has seen a tremendous amount of housing and commercial development. We understand the need for more housing however, we also know that it could lead to future complaints, disputes and potentially even lawsuits from new neighbors that don't understand the act of farming.

We currently have excellent neighbors who have never once made a complaint about being in close proximity to the farm. Many of the adjacent houses to the farm the deeds state that there is an operating farm nearby but that just isn't enough protection nowadays.

Recently, I received a message on our farm's Facebook page from a potential homebuyer seeking a statement from us. I will share the message with you:

"Hello! We are thinking of buying a townhouse in the development next to your farm. We are super in support of farms but also have some severe allergies and are a little worried about the smell of the slurry and cows. Is there anything you can share with us about how the slurry is maintained to reduce odor or if the odors are strong throughout the neighborhood?"

My response was professional, and I told them to ask the surrounding neighbors for their opinion and also, I encouraged them to purchase the home!

On our dairy farm, we are in full compliance with all the required agricultural practices and have a new manure wastewater and runoff collection system with full recordkeeping. We feel blanket protection would not only benefit the Farm but also mitigate future financial turmoil that could run us out of business, we need the support of our legislators to help take that target off our back. Farmers are exhausted, especially the older generation who just want to farm but not leave it to the next generation of farmers in a gloomy situation. Farmers will always prevail; they are some of the most powerful people in the world. I am not looking for your sympathy, but I want you to put yourself in our shoes and have people come at your way of life, as if you were trying to hurt them. We are just trying to feed our community, the state and beyond. Ultimately, the world needs our farms and farmers. Farmers need the support of their legislators now more than ever to ensure that there is still a farm left for the next generation to take over. We need your support for this bill. Again, thank you for your time. This was my very first testimony and I look forward to a positive productive outcome for all. Thank you.