

Dear Senator Hashim,

The following is submitted in testimony for the Right to Farm Bill S. 45:

With small lots, as in most cities and many towns, we support the ability of towns and cities to regulate and control the raising of livestock in residential areas. The City of Essex Junction, for example, has a history of balancing the rights of farmers in parts of the city while protecting homeowners rights and property values. At present, the city allows any type of defined agricultural plants to be grown but in residential areas livestock is regulated in consideration of homeowners.

The Agency of Agriculture has apparently granted farm status to individuals who do not meet established criteria thus allowing them to evade city or town regulations. On the basis of a submitted application, farm status is granted apparently without physical inspection of a property or requiring submission of business receipts to support the application.

In Vermont, the AgRaps define a small farm as having at least four acres and RAPS establish mandatory offsets from adjoining properties. In a current situation in the City of Essex Junction, the Department of Agriculture granted farm status to a property which is .6 of an acre with the front yard and residence occupying approximately .3 of an acre. In Vermont, residences are not considered farm property. The adjoining properties, separated by the width of a chain link fence, have been subjected to noise, fecal smells and fecal runoff which impacts their enjoyment of their property and decreases its market value.

It is my hope that this information will provide the legislator with significant rationale for returning the control of farming in residential areas to cities and towns.

Sincerely,

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