JAMES MOL FOR HOUSE DISTRICT 61

SUFFIELD • EAST GRANBY • WINDSOR LOCKS

PLATFORM | PILLAR TWO

Farming Viability

Preserving land and keeping farms in business are not the same thing.

THE CHALLENGE

Connecticut has roughly 400,000 acres of working farmland left, and the pace of preservation is slowing. In 2024 the state preserved 693 acres against a ten-year average of 1,211. American Farmland Trust projects 55,000 more Connecticut acres at risk by 2040. The barrier for the next generation of farmers is not interest. It is price: land sells at development value, and a young farmer cannot outbid a developer.

Hartford has done real work here, and it should be said plainly. Public Act 25-152 raised the municipal farm property tax exemption from $100,000 to $250,000 and created a 20 percent investment tax credit for machinery, equipment and buildings. Public Act 25-141 authorized a farmland access program that can buy land, protect it with an easement, and sell it to a farmer at agricultural value. This year Public Act 26-75 increased the state's share when it buys development rights jointly with a town.

Then came the scare. Under Public Act 490, farmland is assessed at its use value rather than market value. When the state issued new use values for the 2025 grand list, they produced sharp assessment increases across Connecticut. In January 2026 the Governor reversed them by letter and reinstated the 2020 values. That fix is administrative. It lives in a letter, not in statute, and the working group convened to find a permanent answer reports to the legislature that takes office in January.

The pattern is the same one this district sees on schools. The tools exist. The farmland access program does not launch until 2027 and has no dedicated staff. Preservation is running at half its average pace. And the assessment protection every farm in Suffield and East Granby depends on rests on one signature.

WHAT I WILL DO IN HARTFORD

- Write the Public Act 490 use-value protection into statute, so a farm's assessment does not depend on which governor is in office.
- Fund and staff the farmland access program in Public Act 25-141 for an on-time 2027 launch, and restore preservation funding to at least its ten-year average.
- Write a permanent AgriScience funding formula into law and put the 80 percent regional facility reimbursement to work for the Suffield program.
- Create a state fund for PFAS testing and remediation on agricultural land, and press the federal government through our delegation to restore the cleanup timetable it delayed at the Air National Guard base.
- Support diversified farm income, including agritourism and the agrivoltaics study due to the legislature by January 2027, so farms can operate as businesses rather than museums.

James Mol lives on a 35-acre preserved farm in West Suffield that he bought in 2008 to keep it from being sold to developers, raises Brabant draft horses there, and serves as the Board of Education's liaison to the AgriScience program.

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