

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Senators, thank you for coming to Pennsylvania and for your interest in the concerns of Pennsylvania agriculture.

My name is Christine Hetz Phillips, and I am the CEO of Fairview Evergreen Nurseries, a 3500 acre agricultural operation located near Erie, Pennsylvania. I also serve on the Board of the Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association (PLNA). PLNA represents predominantly family-owned businesses in Pennsylvania's \$5.6 billion landscape, nursery and retail garden center industry; known as the green industry. The green industry employs over 100,000 Pennsylvanians, is Pennsylvania's largest cash crop and is the fastest growing segment of agriculture in Pennsylvania. Nationally, nursery and greenhouse production represents 11% of commodity agriculture. I also serve on the Erie County Co-operative Extension's Board.

Our green industry has not played a major role in previous farm bills because we are a non-subsidized component of agriculture. The green industry is not seeking subsidies, but stands in need of research and development funding. Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences has provided such research and development, supported by farm bill grant funding. PLNA asks that this funding continue, as the partnership between the College and the green industry has been immensely beneficial to Pennsylvania nurseries, landscape contractors, and garden centers.

With new challenges such as the Asian Longhorn Beetle, Emerald Ash Borer and Phytophthora Ramorum, (Sudden Oak Death) the green industry must be equipped to respond to these diseases or pest crisis. Farm Bill funding can help bridge the widening gap between current resources and these needs. Historically, the Commodity Credit Corporation has been a strong funding source for quarantine and eradication efforts, but Congress has been scaling back access to the program. More funding is needed to ensure the short and long-term safety and stability of our nursery and greenhouse crops.

The challenge of invasive species is another area in our industry that suffers for lack of strong scientific research. Research in this relatively new field is desperately needed, but funding is scarce and difficult to find. The 2007 Farm Bill could provide additional grant dollars for the issue of invasive species so the industry can better understand the implications of certain plants in both our landscapes and forest lands.

(Euonymus Alatus Compacta, or 'Burning Bush' is one plant that is on the invasive list in Connecticut. We have sold approximately 10,000 yearly adding over \$200,000 to our budget. They are truly not invasive and it would be a travesty to allow this kind of legislation to continue.)

Finally, I want to direct your attention to the most vexing problem in the green industry. Our industry's greatest need is access to sufficient labor. Pennsylvania's own Senator Arlen Specter has helped to author excellent legislation, and the Senate has passed this good bill which will begin to solve our nation's labor and immigration crisis. I want to thank the Senators here today for their hard work to achieve a bi-partisan and balanced bill that will achieve a real solution for our farms, communities, and agri-businesses. I call upon the House to tone down the rhetoric, come to the conference table, and help pass meaningful Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

Thank you.