

**Testimony by William H. Wells
W.D. Wells & Associates, Inc.
On the Subject of HB 2260, Legislation to codify the PA Preferred Program
Before the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
Representative Michael K. Hanna, Majority Chairman**

April 22, 2010

Majority Chairman Hanna, Minority Chairman Roher, Representative Houghton and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for coming to Chester County and for your interest in the PA Preferred Program.

My name is William H. Wells, and my nursery, W.D. Wells & Associates, Inc. has served the environmental needs of Pennsylvania and the northeast for more than four decades. We are in the tree business, and as we all know, trees and plant materials are vital to solving environmental challenges as we seek to rebuild and replant the green infrastructure that meets our air and water quality needs, while promoting economic development. 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.

Pennsylvania nurseries and garden centers seeking to promote their locally-grown products have a fantastic option available in the form of the PA Preferred Program. In 2003, PLNA began to meet with staff at the Department of Agriculture, and discuss the entry of landscape and nursery plants into the PA Preferred program. The effort was successful, representing a true partnership approach between industry and the Department. Since 2003, the green industry in Pennsylvania has been a full partner in the program, and it has helped immensely in the marketing and promoting of our Pennsylvania-grown trees, flowers, shrubs, and turf.

HB 2260, legislation to codify the PA Preferred Program and enshrine it in the fabric of the Department of Agriculture for future Secretaries and staff to utilize and expand, is a necessary and very positive next step in the development of the program. I fully support it, as does PLNA. Many thanks go to my State Representative, Tom Houghton. Representative Houghton has taken great initiative here, and believes that environmental progress happens best when we think globally, and act locally. Local buying efforts empower citizens to invest in their communities, reduce the carbon footprint, and keep their local farms viable and dynamic. And, the products that they buy are at the peak of quality and freshness. Pennsylvania agricultural products are prized around the world for their quality and value, and they are a reflection of our belief, as Pennsylvanians, in honest work and the goodness of the land. Making sure that Pennsylvania citizens take advantage of markets close to home is at the heart of the program.

It is my hope that making the PA Preferred program a permanent part of PDA, with the very positive addition of dedicated state funding, will result in more support for Pennsylvania-grown products. Perhaps we can consider a requirement, down the road, that when the state buys agricultural products, they must be PA Preferred.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify on this important legislation. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.