

# The Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization

YALE LAW SCHOOL

## Testimony Opposing

Bill No. 828, Section 1w, with regard to the Governor's proposal to take \$12 million in FY10 and FY11 from the Community Investment Act Fund

Testimony of Allison Tait and Jeremy Golubcow-Teglasi,<sup>1</sup> on behalf of CitySeed, Inc.  
To the Appropriations Committee  
March 27, 2009

Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of CitySeed, Inc., a non-profit organization based in the Wooster Square neighborhood of New Haven, Connecticut. We would like to speak to the importance of agricultural programs supported by the Community Investment Act (CIA) and in opposition to the Governor's proposal to divert money from the CIA fund.

Over the past year, we have been working with CitySeed to draft federal legislation designed to improve the quality and healthfulness of school lunches in New Haven and across the country. In our work with CitySeed, we quickly discovered several things:

1. A national consensus is emerging that the heavily processed meals we serve our kids at school are unacceptable and that improving school lunches could be the key to raising a healthier generation of Americans.
2. Improving school lunches means serving more unprocessed fruits and vegetables.
3. "Farm-to-school" programs that encourage schools to buy unprocessed produce directly from local farmers enhance both the quality of school meals and the viability of local farms.

So what we learned, in effect, is that the fate of farmers is intimately bound up with the fate of schoolchildren, particularly those who live in urban areas like New Haven. Nourishing our children means creating durable connections between schools and the local farmers capable of supplying them with healthy fresh produce. The good news is that, as we speak, Connecticut and at least 39 other states operate "farm-to-school" programs that are reestablishing the connections between agriculture and school food. But to build on the successes of these programs, states must persist—even under difficult budgetary circumstances—in their efforts to protect and preserve local farm economies.

The Community Investment Act supports programs that protect and preserve local farm economies here in Connecticut. The CIA supports farmland preservation by financing the purchase of development rights to agricultural properties. Agriculture viability grants funded through the CIA underwrite projects that promote economically and environmentally sustainable agriculture.

On behalf of CitySeed, we urge this committee to consider the impact of Community Investment Act programs in terms of the vital connections that link together food production and public health, rural and urban populations, environment and economy. **Now is NOT the time to uproot the kind of fruitful investments that, by preserving farmland and protecting farm viability, promote the welfare of every resident of this State, not least our school-aged children.**

We understand that the legislature faces difficult choices this session. And we know that all who testify before this committee come to claim that their favored program is especially important. But the Community Investment Act *is* special. It is a dedicated funding source, set apart from the State budget, and funded by fees paid in every Town for the recording of land transactions. The Community Investment Act is moreover a unique testament to the very meaning of community—an acknowledgment that the diverse people, industries, and landscapes of the State do share a common fate. Because healthy farms are necessary for healthy kids, we strongly oppose any proposal that diverts funds from the Community Investment Act.

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<sup>1</sup> This testimony was prepared through the Yale Law School Community and Economic Development Clinic under the supervision of Robin Golden.