CONNECTICUT FARMLAND TRUST

PRESERVING WORKING LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

March 27, 2009

Re: The loss of Community Investment Act Funding - OPPOSE SB 828 – Sec 1(w).

Provided by: Henry N. Talmage, Executive Director, Connecticut Farmland Trust

To: Members of the Appropriations Committee;

The Connecticut Farmland Trust strongly urges you to maintain funding for the Community Investment Act (CIA).

The Community Investment Act has enabled the Department of Agriculture to have a steady source of funds for farmland preservation and the Ag Viability Grant program. These funds are critical because they enable the Commissioner of Agriculture to act quickly in executing the easement purchases. Funds from the CIA have proved to work well for securing appraisals and surveys, cutting months off the time it takes to complete projects. In addition, CIA funding has enabled the Commissioner to fill key staff positions that are necessary to carry out the state goals for farmland preservation.

The Community Investment Act funds are important as they provide a source of funds to match the increased federal funding for farmland preservation from the 2008 Farm Bill. Connecticut has an opportunity to leverage its investment by taking advantage of the increased funding, but only if we provide a match. The climate for federal funding of farmland preservation has never been better and we should not let those funds bypass Connecticut because we failed to provide matching funds.

The Community Investment Act provides funds by placing a tax on real estate transfer activity. The development pressure that threatens our farms is tied directly to the level of real estate activity. To that end the Community Investment Act is a fair way to fund farmland preservation because the revenues generated are invested directly back into the environment and community. Those of us concerned with farmland preservation in Connecticut understand that cuts will need to be made in funding. We hope that the Community Investment Act can be left in place as it is the best solution to maintaining farmland preservation during these tough times.

Henry Talmage
Executive Director

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