

Appropriations Committee
December 9, 2009

*Testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association on
Governor's Proposed Deficit Mitigation Plan and the Impact of the Governor's Rescissions*

We oppose the proposed redirection of \$4,789,000 in Community Investment Act (CIA) funds to the General Fund rather than be put toward the purposes for which the fund was established. Our opposition is for several reasons:

The CIA is Working: At the beginning of 2009, the Community Investment Act had already directly supported over \$35 million and leveraged another \$76 million for farmland protection, open space conservation, low income housing assistance, and historic preservation grants in 130 towns (this impressive stretching of resources has no doubt increased during 2009). The leverage and partnering attracted by the CIA Fund is one of the reasons why its continuance is so critical at the same time agency budgets and other funding sources are being cut.

The CIA is Partnership: The CIA is supported by a broad coalition of conservationists, farmers, housing advocates, and historic preservationists, who joined forces with the General Assembly in a common and visionary goal of protecting and enhancing the unique character of Connecticut. This coalition fought hard to have a reliable dedicated fund that could be depended upon to make ongoing investments.

The CIA is Jobs: CIA fund projects not only have direct benefits, but also have multiplier effects through a significant "value chain" that benefits job creation and thoughtful community development statewide. These are quality of life investments that are necessary if Connecticut is to remain competitive.

The CIA is Self-Sustaining: It is remarkable that a small transactional fee has raised such significant funding for conservation and other purposes. It will continue to raise funding without tinkering and will take on extra importance in times where dollars spent such investments will need to stretch farther than ever before. As far as land conservation is concerned, we are unlikely ever again to find better value for the dollar.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, and please be a Legislature that represents vision rather than rescission for Connecticut.

Sincerely,



Eric Hammerling
Connecticut Forest & Park Association