



## **CT NOFA**

### ***Cultivating an Organic Connecticut***

February 16, 2009

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee:

I'm Bill Duesing, Executive Director of CT NOFA, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut. I'm writing in opposition to Bill 828 on behalf of CT NOFA and its more than 700 members. For over 25 years CT NOFA and its members have been educating and advocating for a local and organic food system and for farmland protection.

Specifically we are very upset on the raid on the Community Investment Act funds to support the general budget. The CIA passed with much enthusiasm from the agriculture community and from the broader coalition that also supported affordable housing, historic preservation and open space. It was a small fee from many folks to support increasingly important aspects of the quality of life in Connecticut.

As an agricultural organization we were especially pleased with the increase in farmland protection that the CIA allowed. Farmland is being lost all over the Earth, so it is especially important to protect the fertile farmland in Connecticut. The CIA allowed a ramp up in protection that encouraged more landowners to apply to preserve their land. Staff and funding cuts from raiding this funding stream will slow down the important work of protecting our productive resources. It will also risk the loss of Federal Farmland Protection matching funds that are an important resource for our state.

Many of our member farms have benefited from the Agricultural Viability matching grants that have allowed farms to install processing kitchens, greenhouses and other facilities to make local food more available in Connecticut. It is exciting to see towns using these matching funds for infrastructure and planning for agriculture that will help make food more available in years to come.

We believe that a vibrant local food system is critical for Connecticut's future.

Food is our most important energy source. The fruits and vegetables that Connecticut's farmers and gardeners can produce are increasingly known to be very important to our health, and their increased consumption linked to the control of our future medical care costs.

Connecticut has made great progress over the past decades and especially since the passage of the Community Investment Act. Don't raid these funds. Keep your eyes on the long term health of our citizens and our environment.

Thank you for considering these remarks.