



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, Inc.

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Testimony in regard to:

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S BUDGET AND THE LOSS OF COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACT FUNDS

Submitted by: Don Tuller, President, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of nearly 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.

Connecticut Farm Bureau supports Department of Agriculture funding for the Farmland Preservation, CT Grown, Agricultural Viability Grants and FarmLink Programs and opposes the loss of Community Investment Act Funds for these programs.

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

My name is Don Tuller from Tulmeadow Farm in West Simsbury. I am the President of Connecticut Farm Bureau and I am here today on behalf the thousands of our farmer members to urge you to protect the Community Investment Act. In 2005, with much fanfare, the Connecticut General Assembly adopted and Governor M. Jodi Rell signed into law Public Act 228, and with good reason. The Community Investment Act was landmark legislation that brought together diverse interests. Public Act 228 established a fee on the filing of documents on local land records. For the first time, Connecticut's farmland, open space, historic preservation and affordable housing causes would have a dedicated source of funds dedicated to meaningful programs in these areas.

Since then, the programs funded under the Community Investment Act have flourished. The CIA funding that goes to the Department of Agriculture has been put to good use. Annually, \$1 million has been allocated to Agricultural Viability Grants. Monies have been awarded to many communities across our state to assist them in planning for agriculture and numerous not for profits have accessed funds to enhance the availability of locally grown foods. Farmers have been awarded matching grants used to expand and diversify their operations. One hundred thousand dollars has annually been allotted to the CT Grown program to encourage citizens to purchase safe, healthy, locally grown foods and products. Seventy-five thousand dollars are allotted to Connecticut's FarmLink program each year. This program seeks to link the owners of farmland with individuals looking to farm. The balance of the agency's CIA funds is committed to protect prime and important farmland. Through the purchase of development rights, these lands may only be used for agriculture. The Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program has benefited greatly from CIA funds. These funds have allowed the program to be properly staffed, to act in a more timely fashion and to increase efficiency.

Connecticut Farm Bureau strongly urges you to protect the Community Investment Act and to support the good works it achieves.