

March 11, 2010

To: Appropriations Committee

From: Sam Hammer, farmer, Holcomb Farm CSA, West Granby

RE: OPPOSE Governor's proposal to take \$5 million from Community Investment Act Account

Public Act 228 – An Investment in Our Farms and Communities

By Sam Hammer, Holcomb Farm, Granby

When Governor Rell signed into law The 2005 Community Investment Act – also known as Public Act 228 – the State took an important step in providing stable funding for public investments in agriculture, historic preservation, open space preservation, and affordable housing. The CIA was a far-sighted move to preserve the visual character, neighborhood diversity, and natural assets of our state. The agricultural funding, in particular, helps ensure that irreplaceable farmland and the production of safe, high quality local food are not lost from our communities.

To support the important work of the CIA, a dedicated fund was created apart from the volatile General Fund and funded by a fee on real estate transactions. By keeping CIA funding separate from the bonding process, the bill's supporters hoped to protect the program from the annual budget gyrations of the General Assembly. Unfortunately, the Governor's recent budget mitigation package included a \$5 million "fund sweep" from the Community Investment Act (CIA), which would be a major step backward.

Since its inception, the CIA has funneled millions of dollars to projects in every corner of the state. In the Agricultural realm, the CIA supports the Farm Viability Program that gives grants to farmers and non-profits and municipalities that work with farmers. Between 2009-2011, CIA funds will be a vital source of dairy support funding that will help keep over 70,000 acres of farmland in active agricultural use. The CIA also supports programs at the Department of Agriculture including Farm-to-Chef, Farm-To-School, Farm Link, CT Grown marketing program, and farmland preservation.

Here in Granby, CIA money has gone to the Catherine Marshall Preserve, The House of Hayes Farm, and to us at Holcomb Farm. Two grants from the Farm Viability Program have enabled us to invest in hoopouses that allow us to grow more reliable and productive crops of tomatoes without chemicals and also grow cold hardy greens in the winter time without supplemental heat.

(This letter was also submitted to the *Granby Drummer*)