



Testimony in Opposition to Governor's March 1, 2010 Deficit Mitigation Plan

Presented by
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The Trust for Public Land
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To: Chair and Members of the Committee on Appropriations:

On behalf of the Trust for Public Land, I would like to express my strong opposition to Governor Rell's call for a "Fund Transfer" of \$5M from the Community Investment Act into the state's General Fund.

By way of introduction, The Trust of Public Land is a national non-profit organization that works in partnership with landowners, community groups and governmental agencies to protect land for public enjoyment. Our Connecticut office is located in New Haven and over the past 15 years we have protected more than 6000 acres in over 40 Connecticut communities.

The Community Investment Act (CIA) funds have enabled our partners to protect working farms, forestland and open space that otherwise would have been lost forever to development; the programs that are funded through this account have become the backbone of land preservation in the State of Connecticut.

As we all know, due to the decrease in property values over the course of the last two years, the time is right to purchase land for conservation. Without a market for development, landowners are anxious to sell; and with land prices being at a record low, communities and land trusts are anxious to buy. However, without state funding to help finance these transactions, towns and land trusts are unable to take advantage of these conservation opportunities. It is most telling to note that since the Department of Environmental Protection announced last month that it was offering an open space grant round in 2010 – funded through the CIA – we have seen a surge in interest on the part of towns and land trusts in putting land conservation deals together.

We respectfully contend that making cuts to this vital source of conservation funding will likely do little to ease the current budget crisis and may actually result in further adverse impacts upon our state's already burdened economy. Land conservation is just as important to our economy as any other real estate transaction. Open space, farmland and historic property preservation enhance the quality of life in our communities; help to increase the value of neighboring properties; bring tourists to Connecticut towns; and enable farmers to earn a living by producing local food for Connecticut residents. Indeed, the ripple effect just from the announcement of this year's open space grant has already been felt by attorneys, appraisers, title searchers, environmental consultants and other professionals with whom we work as we gather the information we need in order to move our conservation projects forward.

Accordingly, The Trust for Public Land respectfully urges the committee to preserve the Community Investment Act account so that it may continue to fund the critically important programs that enhance the economy and quality of life in the State of Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.

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