

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony in Opposition to H.B. No. 6357 To the Education Committee

Submitted by: Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
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Amy B. Paterson, Esq.
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Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Committee:

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council in opposition to **Section 22 of H. B. No. 6357: An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education**, which proposes to divert \$1 million per quarter (\$4 million annually) from the Community Investment Act (CIA) to the Department of Education's "Healthy Foods Initiative". Although this is a worthy program, CLCC and our CIA partners strongly contend that it should not be funded through the CIA.

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) works with land trusts, other conservation and advocacy organizations, government entities and landowners to increase the pace, quality and scale of land conservation in Connecticut while assuring the perpetual, high quality stewardship of conserved lands in the state. As Connecticut's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, CLCC focuses on building land trust capacity and sustainability, leading a unified land conservation voice for public policies that support land conservation, and engaging broad constituencies to foster a deep understanding of the benefits and need for land conservation. CLCC is guided by a Steering Committee with statewide representation.

The CIA was enacted to fund four specific land use programs which support the economy and create jobs. Enacted with tremendous bipartisan support in 2005 to address the social and environmental impacts of suburban sprawl, the CIA provides increased funding for state programs for **open space, farmland/dairy production, historic properties and affordable housing**. Funded by a surcharge on recording fees, the impact of the CIA on the economic well-being and overall quality of life in our communities has exceeded all expectations. Virtually every town in Connecticut has benefited from the CIA.

According to figures compiled by a statewide coalition of organizations representing the CIA program sectors, approximately \$85,318,000 in CIA funds has been invested in Connecticut from 2006-2012. Considering that there is at least a one to one match with private funds, this means total investment in our towns and cities of approximately \$170,636,000.

In addition, the CIA investments in local farm businesses and land protection have contributed to the viability of the \$873 million outdoor recreation industry and the \$3.5 billion agricultural industry together generating 28,000 jobs. Over 2,000 jobs were created in the affordable housing and historic preservation sector due to CIA projects, and 157 dairy farm businesses were saved with CIA support.

The CIA is critical to land conservation. Since its inception, the CIA has funded eighty-eight (88) acquisitions through the Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWLA) grant program – the state's only matching grant program for land trusts, towns and water companies seeking to conserve open space -- permanently protecting 2,707 acres of open space and fifteen (15) Community Gardens, at a cost of \$15,267,477. (2011 Annual Report to the Environment Committee May 2012)

The 2012 grants which were recently announced by Governor Malloy would permanently protect another 2,730 acres.

The CIA funding is critical to the viability of the OSWLA program and the land conservation community's ability to help the state meet the statutory goal set forth in Connecticut General Statutes Section 23-8(b) of conserving 21% of the state lands by the year 2023.

In conclusion, the diversion of CIA funds to other programs, no matter how worthy, threatens the level and integrity of the funding available for the programs for which the CIA was created – land use programs with few, if any, other sources of funding -- and sets a very dangerous precedent for future dilution of the fund. On behalf of CLCC and the land conservation community, we respectfully request that the funding of the Healthy Foods Initiative be funded not through the CIA but rather as a stand-alone line item under the Department of Education budget.

Thank you again for your consideration and for this opportunity to submit testimony.