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Testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Legislation before the Education Committee on February 15, 2013	Support/ Oppose
H.B. 6357: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING EDUCATION	Oppose Funding Source

My name is Eric Hammerling and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, the first conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. As you know, CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly every year since 1897 on issues such as sustainable forestry, state parks and forests, trail recreation, natural resource protection, and land conservation.

On behalf of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA), I submit testimony in opposition to Section 22 of H.B. 6357 which proposes diverting \$4 million per year from the Community Investment Act fund to support the healthy foods initiative of the Department of Education. This language should be removed from the bill.

We do not suggest that the Healthy Foods Initiative is not an important program, but it should be funded as a stand-alone line item under the Department of Education budget.

The Community Investment Act was established in 2005 as a partnership effort to fund specific issues -- open space/recreational land protection; farmland preservation/dairy farm support; historic property rejuvenation; and affordable housing expansion. Existing funds generated by the Community Investment Act fall far short of the needs existing in these various sectors, and it would be unfair to further divide the funding that is already inadequate.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill, and I am glad to respond to any questions you may have via ehammerling@ctwoodlands.org or 860/346-TREE.