

To the Education Committee,

Connecticut Audubon Society opposes the inclusion in H.B. No. 6357 (An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education) of a provision that would fund the Department of Education's Healthy Foods Initiative through the Community Investment Act (section 22, paragraph A).

The provision would unacceptably siphon precious funding from the four customary land use purposes of the Community Investment Act, namely open space acquisition, farmland preservation/dairy support, brownfields remediation and affordable housing.

As the state's leading conservation organization, with a membership that reaches into all corners and municipalities of the state, Connecticut Audubon Society's main interest here is in the open space funding component of the Community Investment Act.

Money for conservation in Connecticut is hard enough to come by as it is. Shoe-horning the Healthy Foods Initiative into the CIA would benefit a no-doubt worthy cause at the expense of one of the CIA's core programs – one that has had demonstrable achievements.

Since 2005, the CIA has funded 88 purchases through the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program, permanently protecting 2,707 acres of open space and 15 community gardens, at a cost of \$15.3 million. Another round of grants announced recently will permanently protect an additional 2,730 acres.

Connecticut Audubon Society stands with the rest of Connecticut's conservation community in recommending that the Healthy Foods Initiative be funded as a separate line item in the Department of Education budget.

We urge your committee to remove the provision that would fund the Healthy Foods Initiative through the Community Investment Act.

Respectfully,

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