

Appropriations Committee

April 21, 2015

H.B. No. 6825 AN ACT MAKING DEFICIENCY APPROPRIATIONS AND ADDRESSING THE DEFICIT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Brian Florek, I am the Supervisor of Surveys and Mapping with the State of Connecticut and I am offering testimony as a proud member of the CSEA SEIU Local 2001 and resident of the state of Connecticut. I am submitting to speak against the proposed cuts/diversion of funding from the Community Investment Act. Under the Community Investment Act, a \$40 recording fee is collected on every real estate transaction. Those funds are then distributed in support of historic preservation, protecting and purchase of open spaces, preserving farmland, improving farm viability, and creating affordable housing.

Decision makers must consider not just the costs of protecting parks, open space, and farmland but also the real economic and fiscal benefits provided by these lands. Parks and protected open space increase the value of nearby residential properties because people like living close to parks and protected open spaces and are willing to pay for the privilege. A 2010 report by The Trust for Public Land found that on nearby Long Island, parks and protected open space raised the value of nearby residential properties by \$5.18 billion (2009) and increased property tax revenues by \$58.2 million a year. Connecticut's parks and open space provide enjoyment, recreation, cost savings, and local revenues, supplying quantifiable economic benefits worth millions of dollars every year. These benefits include cost savings provided by functioning natural systems, such as clean drinking water, and direct revenue generation from Connecticut's tourism and farming industries.

The Governor's proposal would sweep a good portion of the funds from the Community Investment Act (CIA) from January 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017, depositing the monies in the general fund over that time period. This unprecedented diversion would effectively end the Community Investment Act as we know it, directly impacting the character of our state.

As the Hartford Courant reported in February, these cuts would devastate conservation. "The best time to acquire and preserve conservation land is always now. As the state's economy strengthens and the pace of real estate development picks up, critical habitats in all areas of Connecticut will be threatened. The governor's budget cuts, if enacted, will eliminate the most important preservation tool and make the loss of those critical habitats all but inevitable."

In closing I respectfully request that these funds continue to be dedicated and used as the legislation intended.

Brian D. Florek, LS
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