

March 7, 2015

To: The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee
Senator John W. Fonfara
Representative Jeffrey J. Berger

re: Testimony regarding elimination of the Community Investment Act.

In 2005, Public Act 228, also known as *The Community Investment Act*, was signed into law. This landmark legislation has been instrumental in protecting and preserving the beauty and unique character of Connecticut for future generations. The Community Investment Act became law as a result of strong bipartisan support at the State Capitol for the work of an unprecedented coalition of farmers, environmentalists, historic preservationists, and housing advocates. Now the remarkable and tangible benefits of that Act for Connecticut's diverse communities are being threatened.

The Governor's proposal to reallocate Community Investment Act funds would be devastating to the historic preservation programs that so many have worked tirelessly to develop over the past decade. Advocates of the Act, including myself, fear that it is unlikely that the program would ever be reinstated in its current form should the Governor's proposal be approved. Many can attest to the well-documented long-term economic benefits of funding community-based historic preservation programs. As Connecticut's State Archaeologist, my own concerns regard the threat this proposal represents to our State's heritage. The Community Investment Act has resulted in the preservation of well over a thousand of Connecticut's precious historical places. Collapsing historic homes and theaters have been restored to their original beauty. Decaying mills have been repurposed into vibrant living spaces or reborn as places for modern manufacturing industries; others now house commercial or arts venues. In so doing, the Community Investment Act has insured that local communities not only

maintain a link to their past, but it has been able restore life and vitality to otherwise economically marginalized cultural spaces. Without our historical landmarks, American society is doomed to become overwhelmed by the homogenizing and anonymizing developments of big-box outlets and shopping malls. Our very identities are at stake.

We live in troubling times. Globally, heritage landmarks are threatened daily by both religious and economic zealots. I want to believe that we are better than that. If we are to insist that Connecticut is “Still Revolutionary” we dare not threaten the very heritage that makes us unique, that makes us pertinent, that makes us Connecticut. As citizens, we are defined by the stories and places that surround us. Take those away and we are ignorant and doomed to repeat our past failures. Without history we are automatons, trundling back and forth to work -- without a thought for the past, and no vision for the future. We dare not let the Governor’s reallocation of Community Investment Act funds threaten our heritage. Too much is at stake to let short-term budget challenges destroy who we are as citizens of this great State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Brian D. Jones". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Brian D. Jones, Ph.D.

Connecticut State Archaeologist