

Distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

I am Nancy Ahern, a New Haven native and resident and a board member of the New Haven Preservation Trust. I'm speaking in strong opposition to Section 29 of S.B. 946, An Act to Implement the Governor's Budget, which would transfer precious Community Investment Act funds to the General Fund. How alluring that money must be to someone facing a budget deficit. But the good it does to the state – just take a moment to consider Section 29 (a), which details it all – is virtually incalculable. These are programs that work!

Since its founding in 1961, the New Haven Preservation Trust (NHPT) has been at the forefront of preservation advocacy throughout New Haven. The Trust was instrumental in preserving local landmarks including New Haven City Hall, the Davies Mansion (now Betts House) and Union Station. The Trust led the effort to designate the City's first Local Historic District, Wooster Square, in 1970. Since then, the Trust has provided technical preservation advice to thousands of New Haven property owners, created a New Haven Historic Resources Inventory, and supported the nomination of 35 individual properties and 18 historic districts throughout the city (one where I live) to the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2007, despite a long and distinguished record of preservation accomplishments, NHPT considered closing its doors due to a lack of operating funds. Fortunately, grants provided through the Community Investment Act allowed us to continue, expanding our staff and professional service to the community.

With Basic Operating Support through the Community Investment Act and administered by the state Department of Economic and Community Development, the Trust's capacity to develop meaningful educational and technical assistance programs has grown substantially over the last eight years. Architectural walking tours, lectures, historic preservation awards and plaques (this is mine), and special tax credit meetings have enhanced the public's appreciation of and ability to preserve the city's architecture. In addition, we are able to offer important preservation services and consultation to developers, property owners, municipal agencies, peer non-profit organizations and others – all to the benefit of the both the local community and the state as a whole.

With grant assistance from the DECD, the Trust completed a survey of 125 Modernist buildings constructed in New Haven between 1930 and 1980. We recently launched a curated professional website to showcase a selection of these significant Modernist structures, each entry supplemented with informative text and photographs.

These accomplishments could not have happened without the passage of the Community Investment Act and its dedicated mission to historic preservation activities. The disappearance of these funds as currently allocated will adversely affect the ongoing efforts made by Connecticut's preservation community to recognize and revitalize historic resources. Please, honorable legislators, delete Section 29 from this bill and save the Community Investment Act as originally intended.

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