

# ***CONNECTICUT STATE GRANGE***

## **TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SECTION 5 OF HOUSE BILL 6825, AN ACT MAKING DEFICIENCY APPROPRIATIONS AND ADDRESSING THE DEFICIT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015**

**APRIL 21, 2015**

I am Gordon Gibson of Vernon, Legislative Liaison for the Connecticut State Grange, speaking in opposition to Section 5 of House Bill 6825, An Act Making Deficiency Appropriations and Addressing the Deficit For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015. Section 5, if passed, would divert \$15,200,000 from the community investment account to the general fund. The community investment funds are generated by a surcharge on all deeds and other instruments recorded in the land records in all towns in Connecticut and are divided between the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Historic Commission and the Department of Housing where they are earmarked for programs specified in the legislation.

The Grange supports all the programs for which the Community Investment Act funds are used, but especially the Department of Agriculture where the funds are used to preserve farmland and provide viability grants to farm operations and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection where the funds are used to purchase land for state parks, forests, wildlife areas and other open space programs.

Connecticut has some of the most productive farmland in the world, but we are irretrievably losing much of it to development despite the state, local and private programs to preserve it. Transferring the CIA funds to the general fund will only increase the rate of farmland loss because of the lack of funds to preserve it. The State has various programs to help small businesses, but the loss of the CIA funds will seriously reduce the number of farm businesses that can be assisted with viability grants. We will never have enough land to produce all the food we consume in Connecticut, but the loss of active farms and active farmland will only increase the amount of food we must import and will increase the overall cost of food in Connecticut due to the transportation costs from farm to table.

Connecticut is a densely populated state and we need to protect the open space we have left. Our state parks, forests, wildlife areas and other open space properties provide needed spaces for both recreation and conservation. Our open spaces also provide areas where the ground can absorb rainfall to recharge our lakes, ponds, wetlands and underground aquifers which provide us with the water we need for many purposes. As a retiree from the former Department of Environmental Protection I can personally attest to the struggle to obtain the funds needed to purchase land for the various programs of DEP and now of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Transferring CIA funds from their original purposes to the general fund will only increase the need for the DEEP to use more bond funds to accomplish their goals, thus putting the State deeper in debt due to the increased bond authorizations. The Grange therefore opposes any transfer of CIA funds to the general fund.

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The funds generated by the Community Investment Act have helped preserve the quality of life for both present and future generations of Connecticut residents. Do we really want to endanger the future quality of life in Connecticut by transferring the CIA funds to the general fund? The Connecticut State Grange believes we should leave the Community Investment Act funds as they are, accomplishing the purposes for which they were created. The Grange therefore urges the General Assembly to delete Section 5 of House Bill 6825.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

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