



**Testimony opposed to Section 5 of HB 6825, An Act making Deficiency Appropriations and Addressing the Deficit for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015.**

**April 20, 2015 before the Appropriations Committee**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. End Hunger Connecticut! is opposed to Section 5 of HB 6825. As the current vice-chair of the Connecticut Food Policy Council and a member of the steering committee of the Working Lands Alliance this cut goes particularly deep. This legislation proposes to divert \$15.2 million from the Community Investment Act which is in addition to a proposed sweep of the Community Investment Act from January 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017.

The CIA sweep affects many successful programs in the state, programs that increase Connecticut's quality of life, increase our economy and increase access to our local commodities. The Community Investment Act is an innovative community-based fund that was created through successful collaboration between many high need and successful programs.

One is particular is the CT Food Policy Council. The Council was created in 1997 by the state legislature in Sec. 22-456 of the CT General Statutes. It provides the opportunity for representatives of state agencies and private organizations to discuss issues, develop policies and government actions that influence the availability, affordability, quality and safety to our food supply. The Council was the first statewide food policy council in the nation, beginning a tradition that has been emulated in many states. We receive an annual appropriation from the CIA of \$25,000.

**In Section 5 (3) of HB 6825 the CT Food Policy Council will lose \$100,000. This is funding that we have not been able to access over the years, not for want, and find ourselves unable to do work we have committed to.** While we understand the concept of shared sacrifice losing all the funding we have in one sweep is devastating and leaves a large void in a program that will increase both food access, local agriculture, and brings government, non-profits and local community members together to build a better food policy for the state.

This year we have been working with the Zwick Center at UConn School of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources to reexamine the status of community food security in CT. The report, in partnership with Zwick Center and The CT Food Policy Council was last completed in 2012. This report is used to support policy recommendations and for funding to improve community food security in the state. It can also be used to determine if policies put in place are working to increase the reach of the food system. **The Connecticut Food Policy Council had committed, through a vote, of funding \$15,000 to the completion of the report. The work has started yet the funding has been swept by the Governor's deficit mitigation plan.**

**The CT Food Policy Council is facilitating a first in the nation discussion on the Community Health Needs Assessment as it relates to new IRS rules for tax-exempt hospitals. Hospitals must now offer community benefits that go beyond sole access to services but create opportunity to improve access to healthy food to prevent chronic-diet related disease, such as heart disease, diabetes, low-birth weights, and obesity.** Increased attention to community health improvement and prevention can help improve the health of their patients and lower healthcare costs while increasing access to urban agriculture, farmers markets, healthy corner store initiatives, and a variety of food programs. Cutting the funds to the CT Food Policy Council limits our reach and ability to increase the reach of the CHNA.

Additionally, the CT Food Policy Council is working with the local food policy council's across the state as a liaison and providing technical assistance. Many local food policy councils are doing innovative work on a variety of issues from food reclamation to increasing program access to the number of federal food programs (programs that bring in significant funds to our state while feeding families in need so they can learn and work effectively).

We urge you not to allow the sweep this dedicated funding stream. The funds are used in innovative ways which increase the quality of life here in Connecticut. Our work has great impact here in the state and the loss of funds will harm the ongoing work in the state increasing food production and bringing nutritious foods to our communities, especially those with high need. **Please remove section 5 from HB 6825, the long term health of Connecticut depends on it.**

Thank you very much.