



## Housatonic Valley Association

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April 17, 2015

**TO: Senator Beth Bye and Representative Toni E. Walker, Co-chairs,  
Appropriations Committee**

**RE: Governor's Bill No. 6825: An Act Making Deficiency Appropriations and Addressing the  
Deficit for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015.**

Thank you for the opportunity for the Housatonic Valley Association to submit testimony to the Appropriations Committee in reference to the Governor's Deficiency Bill (H.B. 6825, Section 5). We are gravely disappointed that the Governor and the General Assembly are considering Section 5, an ill-advised budgetary measure diverting \$15,200,000 in Community Investment Act (CIA) funds from their intended purposes and setting back land protection in our state just as development pressure is increasing. We urge you not to adopt Section 5 and strike the entire Section from H.B. 6825.

Founded in 1941, The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) is among the oldest watershed organizations in the nation and also an accredited land trust. Our mission is to save the natural character and environmental health of our communities by protecting land and water in the Housatonic River Watershed. Our membership includes 2,150 households, with 56 communities served by our organization in Connecticut as well as 29 more in Massachusetts and New York. Our Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative represents 24 local, regional and national conservation organizations working in western Connecticut.

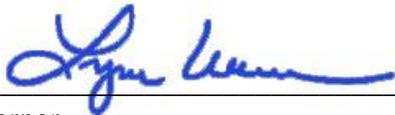
As you are aware, the General Assembly set a state goal in 1997 of acquiring or permanently protecting 21 percent of Connecticut's land as open space by the year 2023 (Connecticut General Statutes Section 23-89(b)). By even the most generous estimates, we are well below the pace required to meet the goal you established in this Statute. Eliminating Community Investment Act funding from the equation virtually assures failure, to the detriment of local economies, vital natural resources, and voter confidence.

The Community Investment Act is meant to be a dedicated source of funding that relies on real estate surcharges rather than a budgetary appropriation. One of its primary purposes is to support the DEEP's Open Space Watershed Land Acquisition (OWLWA) program (C.G.S. Section 7-131d to 7-131k, inclusive), which has helped protect the lion's share of the land conserved in Connecticut in every year that year that it has been available to communities and conservation organizations across our State. Take that away, and all that is left for the OSLWA program is state bonding, which at present is to say no funding at all.

Without the Community Investment Act, we are leaving Connecticut's share of millions of dollars in federal funding on the table. We cannot meet cost share requirements without State participation. In the case of the federal Highlands Conservation Act, matching OSLWA grants have been indispensable in western Connecticut, a fact the Governor acknowledged just last Fall at a celebration of the protection of the 262 acre East Kent Hamlet Preserve. We are working hard in Washington D.C. to bring this federal conservation funding back to the DEEP and Connecticut. Gutting the CIA undermines the credibility of our federal delegation when enlisting support for the enabling legislation.

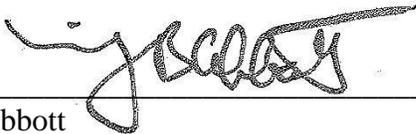
H.B. 6825, Section 5 is a bad idea and bad for Connecticut. We can do better and honor commitments made to protect the natural and historic heritage of our state and the lands and waters that sustain our communities. We respectfully and emphatically request that Section 5 be dropped in its entirety from H.B. 6825 and the Community Investment Act continue to be a powerful and positive asset for our State.

Sincerely;



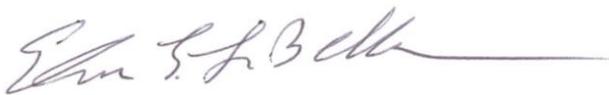
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Lynn Werner  
Executive Director  
Housatonic Valley Association



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Tim Abbott  
Greenprint Director  
Housatonic Valley Association



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Elaine LaBella  
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