

# Wintonbury Land Trust

April 20, 2015

Appropriations Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 2C  
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: H.B. 6825 (& S.B. 946) – Reject Proposed Sweep of Community Investment Act Funds

Representatives and Senators:

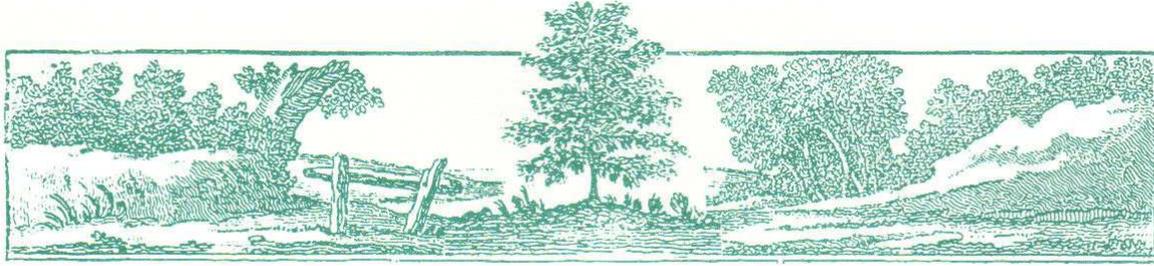
I am submitting this letter on behalf of the Wintonbury Land Trust (WLT) of Bloomfield. WLT is a small, all-volunteer, non-profit corporation that presently holds 22 properties totaling over 200 acres in Bloomfield, Windsor, West Hartford, and Simsbury. The Land Trust strongly opposes the proposed sweep of Community Investment Act (CIA) funds into the General Revenue Fund; CIA funds should be restricted for the purposes for which they were intended, namely conservation of undeveloped land, farmland preservation and dairy support, historic properties preservation, and affordable housing development.

WLT is very proud to have been awarded the 2014 Group Pathfinder Award by Working Lands Alliance for our farmland preservation work. Three projects cited by Working Lands Alliance in presenting our award were partially funded with CIA dollars, so we know first-hand the criticality of this program. I've attached descriptions of these projects on the following page since we believe real-life examples are the best testimony of the good work that can be achieved locally through leveraging CIA funds. WLT would not have been able to accomplish all three of these projects without this funding.

In closing, I cannot over state the value of CIA dollars to community organizations. Grants funded by the Community Investment Act enable small non-profits such as ours to leverage private funding for projects, and help us to build working relationships within the community. CIA funds must be preserved and used for the purposes for which they are intended.

Sincerely,

Paula Jones  
Secretary, Wintonbury Land Trust  
5 Bear Ridge Drive  
Bloomfield, CT 06002  
860-243-9508



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**Lisa Lane Farm, Bloomfield.** WLT and the Town of Bloomfield received an Open Space Grant in 2010 to purchase a conservation easement on the 10.2 acre Lisa Lane Farm. This small urban farm, located in a densely populated minority neighborhood in the southeastern corner of Bloomfield, is leased to a farmer who raises high-quality produce for the area's West Indian Community. WLT established a walking trail on the property with views of wetlands, vernal pools, and the working farm. WLT's partnership with the farmer and the Town allows on-site training for Bloomfield High School's Harris Vo-Ag Center students in both agricultural and environmental education. Lisa Lane Farm also will provide space for residents to participate in a community garden.

**Thrall Farm, Windsor.** The 12.2 acre Thrall Farm, located in the busy Day Hill Road corridor in Windsor was donated to WLT in December 2007 as part of the ING (now Voya) development. The property had not been farmed in over 40 years; two historic barns on the property were nearing the point of no return. WLT partnered with a local farm to begin the hard work of returning this acreage and its two historic barns to agricultural use. Together, over several years, we've been awarded three grants totaling \$75,000 of matching funds from the CIA – a Barn Grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, a Farmland Restoration Grant, and an Agriculture Viability Grant. To date, WLT and our partner farm have committed over \$95,000 of cash and in-kind work to match these CIA funds. We've made great progress, and Windsor residents familiar with the property are thrilled with our restoration efforts, sharing stories about the farm's history. (The son of an "extra" in the 1961 film "Parrish" sent us a photo-copy of a 1960-dated check for \$2,000 from Warner Brothers for the use of a fire engine from the Poquonock Volunteer Fire Company; Thrall Farm was used for location shots in that film.) In addition to reactivating the farm, we are preserving local history. Thrall Farm, because of its barns and rich history, was added to the State Register of Historic Places last April 2, 2014.

**Hawk Hill Farm, Bloomfield.** WLT anticipates closing on this lovely 45-acre historic farm property within the next month; the purchase is being funded in part with an Open Space Grant. The property was at risk of being developed into residential lots. This acquisition will prevent the fragmentation of an existing 250-acre agricultural and wildlife corridor, conserve 22 acres of prime farmland soils, protect the inland wetlands and flood plain contained on the property, and complete the 3-mile LaSalette hiking trail that will link Bloomfield's town center with the Metacomet Trail in Penwood State Park - now part of the National Scenic Trail System.