

March 9, 2015

**To: The Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,
Senator John Fonfara and Representative Jeffrey J. Berger**

Re: Testimony regarding elimination of the Community Investment Act

I am respectfully asking members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee to evaluate the negative impact that moving funds from the Community Investment Act (CIA) to the General Fund would have on a number of programs that in actuality invest in many of the things that comprise healthy and sustainable communities.

We all understand that there are many budget considerations with regard to revenue streams in the state, and that how to best fund needed initiatives is a continuing challenge.

Nonetheless, the money that goes into CIA is money that goes back to the constituency and into the community, in several ways.

As a board member of the Milford Preservation Trust, Inc., and Connecticut Preservation Action, I've seen many of the CIA funded programs such as the Supplemental Certified Local Government Grant Program and Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants (to name just two of several) at work during the last 10 years.

Others have and will no doubt outline many of these projects with more specificity, yet all help to economically revitalize communities; whether that be rehabilitation in a downtown urban area such as Bridgeport, where I grew up; or a preservation-minded community such as Milford, where I lived, and where efforts toward preserving a 375-year-old heritage remain strong; and/or in New Haven, where I currently live, and where preservation initiatives have benefitted greatly from these programs.

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This has been a remarkable turnaround during my own lifetime, during which a large part of the manufacturing base left the state, and many communities began to deteriorate as a result.

Coupled with preservation in this turnaround, however, are also the benefits that the CIA funds have on Affordable Housing, Open Space, and Agriculture.

These are all interconnected components and together cover areas of vital importance to most people: Food, jobs, homes, heritage (both structures and open space). These are fundamentals for most people and also for continuing to sustain vibrant communities within the state—present and future. And each has a reach into revitalizing not just sense of place, but bringing revenue into those places.

I had the opportunity to visit a preservation project in another state, recently—the Brooklyn Army Terminal in NYC. While the focus was preservation, the idea was more—it indeed was becoming a catalyst to new light manufacturing—bringing back, not just the heritage of a building complex that had languished, but bringing it full circle to its original purpose—with investment in local jobs much needed in the surrounding community.

I could not help but be reminded of just how much we rely on the CIA funds in CT to fund similar initiatives in preservation—which also equate to jobs. Preservation initiatives also help foster tourism, in terms of those interested in what the state uniquely has to offer.

In each of the many microcosms of communities—large and small—preservation, coupled with affordable housing, investment in much of the rural farmland, and protection of open space, these are four prongs on the same wheel.

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This is a wheel that is part of what makes this state what it is economically and culturally. It's a wheel that has been in forward motion since the inception of the CIA in 2005.

I urge you to please carefully consider the economic investment that CIA provides to many each year, while reviewing the other necessary state initiatives.

Please don't stop the forward motion of that very vital wheel.

Thank you.

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