



## Torrington Historical Society

March 9, 2015

To: The Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee  
of the Connecticut General Assembly  
Senator John W. Fonfara  
Representative Jeffery J. Berger

This testimony is in reference to SB 946, more specifically section 29, which calls for the re-allocation of Community Investment Act Funds to the Connecticut's general fund from January 2016 through June 2017.

I rise to speak against this budget proposal which would eliminate a very important source of funding for a series of worthwhile initiatives that benefit a wide range of Connecticut residents. As the executive director of the Torrington Historical Society I know first hand how important this funding can be and how it helps the community as a whole.

Consider for a moment how the Community Investment Act has had a positive impact on Torrington. The Torrington Historical Society operates a history museum consisting of three historic buildings located on Main Street. The centerpiece of our museum complex is the Hotchkiss-Fyler House Museum, built in 1900 by Civil War veteran Orsamus Roman Fyler, himself a state legislator and insurance commissioner under three governors. The house museum is one of Connecticut's cultural treasures and an important educational resource for tourists and residents. Recently, we have been able to restore the House Museum's slate roof with private donations and two grants that utilized funding provided from the Community Investment Act.

We first received a technical assistance grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation to prepare plans and specifications for the slate roof restoration. This was followed by a grant award from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development's Historic Restoration Fund which paid one half of the actual roof restoration expenses.

The benefits of the new slate roof include protecting the House Museum from water damage and restoring the building's architectural integrity but they go far beyond that. Like many of Connecticut's older industrial cities, Torrington is working to revitalize its historic center. In the last few years that revitalization has been fueled by a growing number of arts and cultural based businesses and organizations. The Community Investment Act funds which were used for the slate roof have helped to preserve a cultural resource that is an important part of Torrington's downtown revitalization and economic development strategy.

I know that I speak for many other stewards of historical properties when I say the Community Investment Act is a critical source of funding for preserving Connecticut's heritage and its sense of place, but we must also keep in mind the broader community benefits. Among those are revitalization, economic development, and quality of life. Nor should we forget that many of the funding recipients also provide educational opportunities through exhibits and programs that help us understand our history and our communities. In light of all these worthwhile benefits, I urge you to keep the Community Investment Act working for the citizens of Connecticut as it was intended.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mark McEachern  
Executive Director  
Torrington Historical Society