



**The Hartford Audubon Society, Inc.**

**PO. Box 270207 West Hartford, CT 06127-0207**

**Testimony in Opposition to SB946, Section 29**

To: CT General Assembly Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee,

Co-Chairs Fonfara, Berger, and Members of the Committee

The Hartford Audubon Society is a 100 year old society with over 400 members, whose purpose is to increase knowledge of birds and awaken a public interest in preservation and protection of all wildlife and the environment. We strongly oppose cutting funding to the Community Investment Act, the State Parks, moving the Council on Environmental Quality to the Office of Legislative Management, and its impacts on smaller environmental groups.

The CIA grants have been used to preserve bird habitat such as farmland and grasslands which are the most endangered habitat in CT. Farmlands provide habitat for Eastern Bluebirds, while grasslands host state-threatened and endangered species such as Upland Sandpiper, Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark. These birds are in serious decline. Without CIA grants to preserve open space, we may lose these species in our state.

Birders extensively use our state parks. The possibility of reducing funding or closing any of these will impact not only our enjoyment of the birds, but also the local economies of the nearby towns. Birders bring revenues into these towns through purchases of food and gas.

Moving the Council on Environmental Quality to the Office of Legislative Management will effectively remove the autonomy of this group which is currently our environmental watchdog. We believe this should remain an independent council.

We are also concerned that smaller organizations such as the Conservation Districts may be eliminated. The Conservation Districts provide much public information and native plant sales which encourage homeowners to create bird and butterfly-friendly habitat. Groups which deal with invasive plant species

may also be impacted by loss of funds. Invasive plants are a serious threat to birds, wildlife and native plants.

We urge you not to cut funding to the CIA, the State Parks, and other small environmental groups, and to maintain the Council on Environmental Quality as an independent council.

Thank you.

Zellene Sandler, President

The Hartford Audubon Society

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