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Testimony on SB 338 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT FUNDS FOR COMBATING INVASIVE SPECIES

Environment Committee

Submitted by:

Working Lands Alliance Steering Committee

March 16, 2018

Senators Kennedy, Miner, Flexer, and Somers and Representatives Demicco, Gresko, and Other Distinguished Committee members:

The Working Lands Alliance (WLA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to SB 338, An act concerning the use of Community Investment Account Funds for combating invasive species.

My name is Terry Jones and I am the Chair of the Steering Committee for the Working Lands Alliance (WLA), a broad-based, statewide coalition dedicated to preserving Connecticut's farmland. WLA includes such organizations as American Farmland Trust, the CT State Grange, CT Land Conservation Council, End Hunger CT!, and the CT Farm Bureau, among many others. WLA was one of the primary champions of the Community Investment Act in 2005 and continues to see it as a vital funding source for state investments in farmland and open space protection, dairy viability, affordable housing and historic preservation.

While we understand and fully appreciate the importance of combating invasive species, WLA strongly opposes the use of Community Investment Act (CIA) funds for this purpose. Since its passage in 2005 and a subsequent revision, the CIA has stayed true to its original purposes – to provide a reliable and relatively steady source of funding for farmland protection, open space acquisition, affordable housing, historic preservation and the sustainability of CT's dairy farms.

We encourage the Committee to consider alternative sources of funding for combating invasive species. Several years ago, for example, the Legislature saw fit to provide funding for this purpose through a budget appropriation for two consecutive years. Other states have created programs that generate funding for this specific purpose. For instance, the State of Maine implemented a lake and river protection boat sticker program. All fees collected from this program are paid to the Maine state treasurer, who credits them to two dedicated accounts: Department of Environmental Protection's Invasive Aquatic Plant and Nuisance Species Fund and Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife's Lake and River Protection Fund. The specifics of Maine's sticker program can be found in OLR Report 2014-R-0045.

On behalf of the Working Lands Alliance, I thank the Committee for allowing us to share our thoughts on this legislation. Please know that we are available to act as a resource should you seek additional information on this bill, or other legislation affecting farming and farmland.