Testimony of David Sutherland – Director of Government Relations
Before the Appropriations Committee – February 27th, 2019

In Opposition to the diversion of funding from the Community Investment Act

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I would like to express our opposition to the Governor’s proposal to divert funding from the Community Investment Act (CIA) into the General Fund budgets of each of the four relevant agencies. This proposed diversion will in effect dismantle the Community Investment Act, which has been an extremely cost-effective and job-creating program.

Diverting the currently dedicated revenues from the CIA into the General Fund appropriations for these agencies will very quickly create a situation in which the specific programs intended for funding will be competing with every other program administered by these agencies. It is all too likely that these funds will soon be viewed like any other revenue and appropriation.

The CIA is not funded by taxes, but by fees that property owners pay with the understanding that the revenues generated by it go towards protecting those crucial resources that are most often affected by real estate activity.

After a 2015 proposal to divert CIA funds, the Hartford Courant editorialized:

“This year we’re seeing the shameful gutting of the Community Investment Act. This law, a remarkably farsighted piece of legislation, was passed in 2005….

“The Community Investment Act has been the single most effective tool in the box to stop the spirit-deadening strip-mall sprawl that threatens the state’s environment and quality of life. Annual conferences on tourism ponder how to get people to visit Connecticut. If we don't invest in our history and natural beauty, as well as the arts and humanities, the only way to get people to stop here will be not to repair the rail bridges and the potholes on the highway.”


The programs funded by the CIA create on-the-ground jobs and the type of communities that attract businesses and residents. In the past fourteen years, the CIA has become a critical component of the state’s efforts to protect the resources that are essential to the health, vitality, and economic well-being of our communities. It has funded over 1,400 projects, in every one of Connecticut’s municipalities. Our latest figures indicate that communities have provided almost a one to one match on average for all the projects. The CIA also funds staff positions at the state agencies to administer these programs. This program works extremely well as it is; we urge you not to change it.