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Cushman Farm

Keith Stechschulte
Farm Credit East

STAFF

Chelsea Gazillo - Director
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Working Lands Alliance Policy Statement SB 1061 Environment Committee Public Hearing March 18, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Demicco, Vice-Chairs Gresko and Kushner, Ranking Members Harding and Miner, and members of the Environment Committee:

The Working Lands Alliance appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 1061, legislation that would restore the \$5 million diversion in FY 2019 from the Community Investment Account

My name is Chelsea Gazillo and I am the Director of 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, New Connecticut Farmer Alliance, Connecticut Land Conservation Council, CT NOFA, and the CT Farm Bureau Association, among many others. As an Alliance, we care deeply both about saving Connecticut's farmland and ensuring a healthy agricultural sector and prosperous future for Connecticut's farmers.

One of Connecticut's most successful programs, the CIA generates funding from a land record recording fee to support farmland, open space, affordable housing, and historic preservation projects statewide as well as provide a safety net for dairy farmers. We ask you to keep the CIA intact and focused on its current priorities that improve quality of life statewide.

The results of the CIA legislation – passed in 2005 with bipartisan support – are undeniable. In fact, the impact of the Community Investment Act has exceeded all expectations. Over the last decade, CIA has made over \$152 million in investments spread across every community in the state. The kinds of investments range from the protection of prime farmland in the small town of Columbia, to preservation of historic sculptures in Hartford's Bushnell Park, to the protection of needed farmland and open space in one of the most urban parts of Bloomfield, to the development of supportive, affordable housing for disabled veterans in Jewett City. The list of worthwhile projects goes on and on, and continues to grow as new investments are funded through CIA.

We respectfully remind this committee that forward-thinking legislation was structured to provide a dedicated funding source for these worthwhile investments, so that these efforts across the 4 sectors were not dependent on unreliable bond



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funding or subject to cuts during difficult budget seasons. Thus, our state continues investing in our farm businesses, open space, historic structures, and downtown centers even during difficult budget years, like the ones we are facing now.

On behalf of the Working Lands Alliance, I urge this committee to support SB 1061.
Thank You.

Sincerely,
Chelsea Gazillo