



April 28, 2019

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Cushman Farm

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STAFF

Chelsea Gazillo - Director
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Armando Paolino - Lobbyist

Dear Co-Chairs Fonfara and Rojas, Vice-Chairs Cassano, Leone, Concepcion, and Mesker, Ranking Members Witkos and Davis, and members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee:

Working Lands Alliance appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony in opposition of Section 1 of SB 1137 and Section 5 of SB 1138 both of which would require nonprofits, including land trusts, with "significant" savings accounts, endowments or pensions to pay into a state "community development account" the equivalent of a 25% property tax.

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 CT Farmer Alliance, End Hunger CT!, CT 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.

This proposal would divert critical resources from our alliance's ability to protect farmland from development, promote sound farming practices, and continue programs that promote farm viability. According to the 2017 U.S. National Agriculture Statistic Service – Agricultural Census, the state lost 12.6 percent of its farmland over the past five years. Conversely, the average price for an acre of farmland in Connecticut is roughly \$12,400. This means our state has some of the most expensive farmland in the country and we are rapidly losing it to development. The organizations and individuals who support the Working Lands Alliance care deeply about protecting our state's valuable farmland, creating farmland access opportunities for beginning farmers, and ensuring our citizens can enjoy Connecticut grown products. This proposal would undermine our relationship with donors (many of whom are farmers) who want their donations to support farmland protection and farm viability efforts - not a state tax.

This proposal would add a financial burden on our organization, threatening our ability to save that land that sustains us for future generations.

Please vote NO on these proposals that would tax land trusts

Sincerely,
Chelsea Gazillo

Working Lands Alliance Director