Bill No.: SB-1061
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE RESTORATION OF FUNDS TO THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT.
Vote Date: 3/25/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 3/18/2019
File No.: 660

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Environment Committee
Sen. Craig Miner, 30th Dist.
Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:
Enacted in 2005, the Community Investment Act establish an account for dedicated funding to conserve open space, protect farmland, maintain historic properties and supplement affordable housing projects.

Public Act 18-81 transferred $5 million from the Community Investment Account (CIA) to the General Fund for fiscal years ending June 30, 2018 and June 30, 2019. While this cut from the CIA has negatively impacted the maintenance of historic properties and affordable housing, the loss of funding has especially hurt the state’s dairy farmers and recent efforts to conserve open space.

This bill seeks to restore monies from the CIA transferred to the General Fund.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
None Expressed.
NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC): The Community Investment Act (CIA) was enacted in 2005 through bipartisan support to provide dedicated funding for open space, farmland/dairy support, historic properties, and affordable housing programs. Funds are collected through a $40 surcharge on local recording fees. The CIA is an economic driver in the state, leveraging millions in matching funds, creating jobs, and has invested in over 1,400 projects across the state.

Chelsea Gazillo, Director, Working Lands Alliance: The Community Investment Account has made over $152 million in investments across every community in the state including, but not limited to (1) protecting prime farmland in the town of Columbia, (2) preservation of historic sculptures in Hartford’s Bushnell Park, (3) protection of farmland and open space in Bloomfield, and (4) has supported development of affordable housing for disabled veterans in Jewett City.

Bryan Hurlburt, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association (CFBA): The Community Investment Account has directly supported Connecticut farms through the Agriculture Sustainability account. The CIA is especially important to Connecticut dairy farms because dairy farms in the state have a higher cost of production than other states due to international dairy markets and the delay in access to federal programs.

Jane Montenaro, Executive Director, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation: Through the grassroots advocacy coalition of environmentalists, farmers, historic preservationists and housing advocates, the Community Investment Act (CIA) has changed Connecticut’s landscape immeasurably since its inception. Recent financial budget deficits by the state have threatened the CIA’s viability through cuts and funds being swept. Restoration of funding to the CIA will support all sectors the CIA addresses.

Lori Vitagliano, Government and Public Relations Specialist, South Central Regional Water Authority (RWA): The Community Investment Act supports the Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWLA) grant program. The RWA has purchased 1,200 acres through the utilization of OSWLA. The net effect has protected high-quality public drinking water sites while lessening the cost impact on water rate payers. A side benefit of the program for the RWA and the state is the land conservation efforts contribute to Connecticut’s open space goals and protect the environment from development.

Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, Audubon Connecticut: Money from the Community Investment Account (CIA) supports many programs that are important to a coalition of organizations, including Audubon Connecticut. Through the funding from open space preservation provision of the CIA, Audubon Connecticut is able to expand habitat protections for a numerous bird species throughout the state. Audubon Connecticut and its partners under the CIA “preserve and protect pieces of Connecticut”, it’s important to insure the CIA is protected from future diversions and sweeps for Connecticut’s communities.

The Environment Committee received approximately 15 written testimonies in support of the bill explaining that the CIA is a dedicated fund vital to the support of Connecticut’s
conservation of open space, protection of farmland, maintenance of historic properties, and affordable housing projects.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed.

**Reported by: Steve Smith / Ussawin R. Bumpen   Date: 04/16/2019**