

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 872 (sections 6 and 7) and Senate Bill No. 1118

Appropriations Committee

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Co-Chairs Osten and Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

As the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its 137+/- land trusts, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) advocates for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and works to ensure the long-term strength and viability of the land conservation community in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of CLCC concerning two bills as they relate to the Community Investment Act: **SB 872, An Act Implementing The Governor's Budget Recommendations For General Government (Oppose Sections 6 and 7)** and **SB 1118, An Act Concerning the Community Investment Act (Support in Concept)**.

With respect to **SB 872**, we **oppose Sections 6 and 7** which would transfer the Community Investment Act (CIA) from an off-budget account to the General Fund -- essentially eliminating the CIA as we know it.

Established in 2005 as a dedicated account outside of the budget, the CIA provides consistent funding for state open space, farmland/dairy support, historic properties, and affordable housing programs. The benefits of the CIA are well established and beyond impressive. Funded through a \$40 surcharge on local recording fees, the CIA has invested over \$153 million in 1,400+ projects across all four sectors -- benefiting the economy and quality of life in every town in Connecticut. You may find a list of those projects (updated through 2018) and additional information at <https://communityinvestmentact.org>.

In short, the CIA is working - and as the saying goes, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

Although well-intended as a way to add transparency and accountability to the use of CIA funds, we contend that moving the CIA "on-budget" will actually have the opposite effect: Not only will CIA funds potentially be diverted from the specific purposes for which they are collected (thereby making the surcharge on recording fees in essence another general tax), but as part of the General Fund they will have to compete with other line items in the respective agency budgets through the appropriation process.

We contend that the better way to accomplish the goal of greater transparency and accountability is by **supporting SB 1118**, which would require OPM to review and report on expenditures from the CIA. However, to ensure the legislature receives the most comprehensive review of the CIA account, we suggest SB 1118 further require that the report on "expenditures" includes a breakdown of funds that have been awarded/committed to CIA projects, but not yet allocated/expended. This information will provide a more accurate insight into the use of the funds and the available balances in the account.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

