

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 351
Government Administration and Elections Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director
March 8, 2024

Co-Chairs Flexer and Blumenthal, Vice-Chairs Slap and Morrin Bello, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) is the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its ~120 land trusts. CLCC is a 501(c)(3) organization operating statewide. Our mission is to elevate and strengthen land conservation in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony in strong support of **Senate Bill No. 351, An Act Increasing Funding for the Community Investment Account**, which seeks to increase the recording fee that funds the Community Investment Account (CIA) by five dollars.

Established in 2005 with tremendous bipartisan support and funded through a \$40 surcharge on local recording fees, the CIA provides a dedicated and consistent source of revenue for state programs for land conservation and urban greenspaces, farmland preservation/dairy production, historic property preservation, and affordable housing projects. It also supports important municipal capital improvement initiatives.

PA 05-228 initially established the CIA fee of \$30. The fee structure was amended in 2009 (PA 09-229), increasing the surcharge to \$40, with the \$10 increase providing support to dairy farmers. The \$40 fee structure was made permanent in 2011. For the municipality, of the \$40 collected, town clerks retain one dollar, and the remaining three dollars of the fee become part of the general revenue and are used to pay for local capital improvement projects. The balance (\$26) is allocated equally to the four state agencies that oversee the CIA-funded programs per general statutes.

SB351 proposes a modest increase of \$5 in the recording fee, which would add approximately \$2,000,000 to the overall fund and be allocated across the existing programs. The CIA's track record is a testament to its success: The program has generated approximately \$20 million annually, investing ~ \$150+ million in 1,500+ projects across all sectors since its inception. You may find a list of those projects and additional information at <https://communityinvestmentact.org>, currently being updated.

The CIA has leveraged millions in private and public dollars, benefiting the economy, environment, and quality of life in every town in Connecticut. We urge you to approve SB351.

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

