



TESTIMONY IN **OPPOSITION** TO **SB 872** (SECTIONS 6 & 7) AND IN **SUPPORT** OF **SB 1118**

APRIL 5, 2019

To: Honorable Co-Chairs Sen. Osten and Rep. Walker and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Lori Brown, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on two bills relating to the Community Investment Act. CTLCV **OPPOSES** Sections 6 and 7 of **SB 872**, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for General Government, and we **SUPPORT SB 1118**, An Act Concerning the Community Investment Act.

Enacted in 2005 by the General Assembly, the Community Investment Act (CIA) provides a dedicated and consistent source of funding for the preservation of open space, farmland, and historic sites. These funds can also be used to develop affordable housing and make important municipal improvements.

The CIA is funded through a \$40 surcharge on municipal recording fees, and it has benefited almost every town in Connecticut—providing funds for nearly **1,400 projects statewide**, with over **\$153 million reinvested in Connecticut**.

Sections 6 and 7 of SB 872 would essentially eliminate the Community Investment Act as we know it. Funds would be moved from an off-budget account into the General Fund, where they could have to compete with other line items or be put to other purposes. Our towns rely on the CIA funds to preserve their heritage, protect their resources, and enhance the quality of life that draws residents to Connecticut in the first place.

Environmental programs are already some of the first items targeted for diversion when it comes time to fill a budget hole. Moving the CIA account to the General Fund will make it easier to divert these funds from the specific purposes for which they are collected—essentially making the surcharge on recording fees just one more general tax.

Rather than moving the CIA to the General Fund, we at CTLCV support the concept of SB 1118, which would require the Office of Policy and Management to review and report on expenditures from the CIA account. This would satisfy the desire for increased transparency and accountability without jeopardizing the funds themselves. We also suggest **SB 1118 be amended to require that its report on expenditures include a breakdown of funds that have been awarded to CIA projects but not yet allocated.** This would allow a more accurate analysis of the CIA's funds and balance.

The CIA is working! Please vote NO on any proposal to move the CIA to the General Fund. Thank you for your consideration as you deliberate on SB 872 and SB 1118.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori Brown".

Lori Brown
Executive Director
CTLCV