

Government Administration and Elections Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1522

AN ACT RENAMING THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT THE
DONALD E. WILLIAMS, JR. COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT AND

Title: INCREASING FUNDING FOR SAID ACCOUNT.

Vote Date: 3/26/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/21/2025

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Rep. Michael D. Quinn, 82nd District

Rep. Gregory Haddad, 54th District

Sen. MD Rahman, 4th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

In 2005, State Senator Donald Williams Jr. was instrumental in passing the Community Investment Act which provided funds to community investments across four different sectors. The fees associated with the account was pivotal in the success and operation of different organizations to fulfil the CIA's mission areas. The last fee increase happened in 2011 which brought the amount to \$40. With rising costs and inflation over the past 13 years, there has been a growing demand to increase the funding for the account by increasing the fees associated. This bill would seek to rename the Community Investment Account to honor Donald Williams Jr. and his contributions to the Community Investment Account and to increase the fees to provide more funding for the account. The funding would go a long way to ensuring more community investments occur in Connecticut.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language increases the fee amount from \$40 to \$50 instead of \$46. This was done to provide more funding to the intended recipients.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Senator Cathy Osten, 19th District, Connecticut:

I support the fee increase for processing land records in municipalities thereby increasing monies to the Community Investment Account. The fees have never been increased in 20 years. By increasing the fees, more projects will be provided by the CIA.

Paul Larson, President, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association:

For the agricultural community, the Community Investment Account has a positive impact, specifically to our dairy farms. It has been instrumental in keeping many of them in operations through their grant funds and the Department of Agriculture. As a farmer, the grant funds helped me to improve and expand my farm. I do have a concern pertaining to the fee for real estate transactions and raising it from \$40 to \$46 dollars. The distribution only gives five dollars to the five entities that receive support from the CIA. I believe the transaction fee should be increased an additional four dollars and allow for a two dollar increase to the dairy farm support program. This program has been stagnant for 15 years. Included in my testimony is a breakdown of the utilization of funds thru the CIA to be included in the bill.

Tracey McDougall, Executive Director, the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association:

The CFBA urges support of the bill and ask that the increase in funds be distributed fairly among the recipient groups. Apart from the recording fee for the four sectors of the CIA, there has not been an increase since 2009. The fee has been \$40 since 2011. This directly benefits farmers through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. In 2005, the Community Investment Act was passed providing funds to support worthwhile community-level investment for four sectors:

- Farmland Preservation and Agriculture
- Open Space Conservation
- Affordable Housing
- Historic Preservation

The following farmers submitted testimony in support of the bill:

Cricket Jacquier, Lauelbrook Farm, East Cannan, Connecticut

Arthur Spielman, Spielman Farm, Baltic, Connecticut

Paul Miller, Fairvue Farms, Woodstock, Connecticut

Eliza Patterson, Senior Policy Associate, American Farmland Trust:

This year is the 20th Anniversary of the founding of the Community Investment Account. Since its conception, it has contributed to many agricultural benefits and over \$150 million invested in 1500+ projects throughout the state and across the four sectors. Between 2017 and 2022 Connecticut has lost nearly 10,000 acres of farmland. CIA funding helps us remain in business through the funding for the following:

- Supported the permanent protection of 378 farms. In the 12-year period prior to the CIA's inception, only 61 farms were permanently protected.
- Provided a safety net to our dairy farmers through the Dairy Sustainability Account
- Supported the Farm Transition Grant Program as well as the Farm Viability Grant

Program, together awarding more than \$14 million in grants to over 550 farmers, non-profits, and municipalities that support agriculture as of January 2023.

There has been no increase in the CIA recording fee since enactment and it is important that the fee reflect current economic conditions. Additional funding for farmland preservation and dairy production is essential to long-term viability.

Keith Bishop, President, Bishop's Orchard:

As a farmer for 5 decades, I see the increasing challenges facing Connecticut's agriculture. Recording fees that fund the CIA are a small part of a real estate transaction that has not been increased since 2011. Please ensure equitable distribution of these funds and prevent diversion to other programs. Included in my testimony are specific programs that the CIA funds and how critical they are to maintain our agricultural sector's growth. I am advocating for an increase of \$10 along with Paul Larson of the Connecticut Farm Bureau. Included in my testimony is how I think it should be distributed. This will help secure a prosperous agricultural sector for the state of Connecticut.

Sarah Tinsdale, Director of Preservation Services, New Haven Preservation Trust:

The Community Investment Act is most important for conserving open space, protecting farmlands, reserving historic properties, and supplementing affordable housing programs. As a historic preservation organization, the CIA has been critical for our work. The Trust directly benefited from the ISCB Grant for Historic Preservation Non-Profit Organizations, with programs supporting our ability to build by collaborating with the State Historic Preservation Office. The trust supports increasing the recording fees because any additional funding will further benefit historic preservation in Connecticut.

Aaron Marcavitch, President, Connecticut Preservation Action:

As a 501(c) organization, we have partnered with the Community Investment Act on various projects. The CIA provides funding for open-space, farmland preservation, affordable housing, and historic preservation. This year, Town Clerks will help manage the program. Historic preservation creates thousands of jobs from tradespeople to architects. The elements of open space, farmland, and affordable housing also brings in more jobs. The minor increase will have major implications for the State of Connecticut and the Connecticut Preservation Act.

Violet Johnson, Director, New London Landmarks:

Though not a resident of Connecticut, I am an employee of New London Landmarks, a preservation organization based in Connecticut. Our work would be almost impossible to conduct without the Community Investment Act. The CIA allows us the time and effort to research and promote our programs, that for the most part, is free. These programs are events, tours, and oral history programs. The CIA serves three purposes, supporting professionals, improving community safety, and maintaining unique state heritage. The scope of structures creates the need for skilled workers in various fields and trades. The CIA invests directly back into Connecticut by keeping history alive, empowering those who live and work in the state, and employing tradesmen while increasing the safety and health of the state.

Connie Manes, Executive Director, Kent Land Trust:

The Kent Land Trust consists of over 3,000 acres, including 12 properties with trails and other recreational opportunities. Four of these properties were purchased with the help of the

Community Investment Account through their Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program. We have applied for OSWA funding this year for new trails accessible from the Western New England Greenway bike trail. We look forward to pursuing additional ROI properties in the future, so we depend on the OSWA program to fund our conservation projects. This act contributes to Connecticut's communities' unique infrastructure and will carry forward meaningful investments and a sustainable economy for our residents.

Jane Montanaro, Executive Director, Preservation Connecticut:

For over 20 years the Community Investment Act has supported investments in historic preservation, affordable housing, open space, and farmland protection. State Senator Donald E Williams, Jr. had a vision of economic development across Connecticut through the Community Investment Act. We support increasing the funding for what we consider the most important and reliable source of funding for historic preservation. Pass this bill in honor of Senator Williams.

Patricia Spruance, President, Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc.

Increasing the land recording fee by six dollars with the Town Clerks adhering to all statutory fees is what the bill entails. Section 2 (e) allocates a total increase of seven dollars must be amended to address whether the bill is proposing a six dollar or seven-dollar increase.

Sean Ghio, Policy Director, Partnership for Strong Communities.

As a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring all have a safe, affordable home, we urge support of the increased recording fee. The Department of Housing uses allocations from the Community Investment Act to advance housing development initiatives. These funds provide predevelopment support that help move forward other state bonding programs. Included in my testimony specific programs funded through the CIA and previously funded programs. CIA funds will help respond to our housing crisis.

Kevin Gough:

Increasing funding for this account is essential for preserving the character and livability of Connecticut. This fund should not be used to fund churches. This is a separation of state and church issue, and church congregations should pay their own. If it is a historic building converted to a community center than it would be eligible for funds.

Marc E. Mann MD, High Lane Club, Hamden, Connecticut

As a member of a task force seeking historic designation and preservation, we utilized Preservation Connecticut, a group that is funded by the Community Investment Account. In passing this bill, you include increased funding for Preservation Connecticut that is helping us design and restore our clubhouse project.

Christine Nelson, Chester, Connecticut:

The Community Investment Account has helped me as a professional planner guide residents and communities. While working recently as a volunteer with a local cemetery association, we had the benefits of a program funded by the CIA. Preservation Connecticut's technical assistance helped us to conserve 300-year-old gravestones. If it were not for the CIA, we would not have been able to access the expertise of archeologists and architectural historians.

Allison Gray Sanders, Wilton's Historic District and Property Commission:

Recently we needed the service, knowledge, and programs provided by Preservation Connecticut, that is funded by the Community Investment Account. They are our first call for preservation issues. The Circuit Rider's depth of knowledge and practical experience has been relied on by Wilton preservations for a variety of issues as included in our testimony.

Colin Piteo, Sandy Breslin, Connecticut Land Conservation Council:

The Community Investment Account has a proven track record of success. It generates approximately \$20 million annually, investing over \$159 million in more than 1,900 projects across all sectors. The CIA is a proven economic driver that provides a higher quality of life, attracts skilled workers, and leverages private investments for Connecticut's towns. This bill allows the program to continue and expand. Celebrate 20 years of successful community investment by supporting the bill.

The following submitted testimony in support of the bill:

Robert Tod Bryant, Historic Preservation Consultant, Norwalk, Connecticut
Norwalk Preservation Trust
Abigail Coia
Orchard Platt Jr, Milford Preservation Trust
Faye Ringel, President Norwich Arts Center, Norwich, Connecticut
Elaine Dove, Hamden, Connecticut
Henry Haskell, Guilford Preservation Alliance, Guilford, Connecticut
Wendell Livingston, President Historic Rowayton
Nicholas Stuller, Save Historic Middlebury
Frank Sypeck
Renee Tribert
Laurie Deredita
Anonymous

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date: April 1, 2025