

**TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE GENERAL OBLIGATION  
BONDING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE  
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE**

Monday, March 18, 2024

Daniel O'Keefe, Commissioner Designate  
**Department of Economic and Community Development**  
Chief Innovation Officer, State of Connecticut

*2024 General Obligation Bonding Subcommittee:  
Department of Economic and Community Development Hearing*

Senator Moore, Representative Napoli, Senator Hwang, Representative Piscopo, and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding General Obligation Bonding Subcommittee. My name is Daniel O'Keefe, and I am Commissioner Designate of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and the state's Chief Innovation Officer. I appreciate this opportunity submit testimony on the Department of Economic and Community Development 2024 bonding.

Our mission at DECD is to develop and implement strategies to increase the state's economic competitiveness. We do this by attracting and retaining businesses and jobs, revitalizing neighborhoods and communities, and preserving and promoting Connecticut's arts, cultural, and tourism assets.

Over the past few years, our department has been busy implementing the various new and existing programs, and are grateful for the Governor and legislature's continued support of these initiatives. This includes legacy programs, such as our Brownfield Remediation and Revitalization program, the Connecticut Manufacturing Innovation fund, and our various arts, culture, and tourism programs and grants, the new and improved Small Business Boost program, standing up the Social Equity Council and the Community Investment Fund 2030, as well as various pandemic response-related programs.

The Governor's FY 2025 budget recommendation maintains funding levels for our core programs that are funded through bonding. Whereas DECD's proposed operating budget provides us with sufficient funds to carry out our mission and to make important investments in preserving and promoting Connecticut's arts, cultural, and tourism assets, our capital budget contains the bond authorizations necessary to fund some of DECD's most important programs.

Importantly, the Governor's budget maintains \$25 million in yearly bonding to fund the Connecticut Small Business Boost Fund. DECD has pulled back from direct lending, and now partners with banks to focus on supporting minority- and women-owned businesses. The Connecticut Small Business Boost Fund provides a needed infusion of capital in the form of low-interest, user-friendly loans for businesses in underserved communities as well as the technical assistance needed to make these investments sustainable.

Similarly, the \$35 million in bond funding yearly for the Brownfield Remediation and Revitalizations program will continue the state's unprecedented commitment to remediating contaminated sites and restoring them to productive use. From FY 2014 to 2023, the State of Connecticut has allocated substantial resources to reactivating brownfields, with over \$250 million invested to over 259 projects in 70 municipalities, cleaning up more than 3,500 acres of impacted property. These investments have leveraged significant non-DECD funding as well; for every dollar contributed by DECD, non-DECD partners have or will invest an impressive \$12.60.

We are confident that the Governor's proposed budget adjustments will provide DECD with the necessary and sufficient funds to carry out our mission, and to fund some of DECD's most important programs. I respectfully request the committee's support and thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.