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In Re:
State Economic Strategy Plan Information Forum

DATE: JANUARY 10, 2008
HELD AT: UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT
84 IRANISTAN AVENUE
BRIDGEPORT, CT

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Reporter: Samantha M. Howell, LSR #00462

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2 IN ATTENDANCE:
3 Commissioner Joan McDonald
4 Stan McMillen
5 Edward Lavernoch
6 Alex Soule
7 John Harriety
8 David Kooris
9 Robert Fishman
10 Rab Thornton
11 Meghan Lowney
12 Ken Oppediano
13 Richard Tenebaum
14 Marilyn Ondrashe
15 Wayne Valaitis
16 Paul Tempanelli
17 Susan Davis
18 Lee Samonir
19 Kris Lorch
20 Peter Hance
21 Anna Kavel
22 Bernie Lynch
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24
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1 (Forum commenced at 5:12p.m.)
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MR. MCMILLEN: My name is Stan McMillen;

3
4 I'm the chief of the Department of Economic Community
5 Development. I have been instructed to move along, so the
6 agenda for tonight is to make some brief introductions,
7 which I already am with me. I want to talk a little bit
8 about the statute that is the reason that we're here,
9 Public Act Code seven, dash, two three nine. I want to
10 talk a little bit about the purpose of the forums and what
11 we're trying to do, and sort of orient your thinking for
12 this process.

13 At several of these forums we had regional planning
14 agencies present their comprehensive economic development
15 strategies, and, unfortunately, this region's
16 representative had a family emergency and was unable to
17 present that, and we invited them to present instead at the
18 Stamford public forum. So we won't have that presentation
19 tonight.

20 I should say that the forum is being recorded. Every
21 word that is spoken is being recorded by a court reporter,
22 and the transcript of these forums are on our web site, www
23 dot decd dot org, as well as some interesting photographs
24 of the commissioner and myself listening intently.

25 The Public Act Code seven, dash, two three nine

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1 requires the Department of Economic and Community
2 Development to create an economic strategic plan for the
3 State of Connecticut by July 1, 2009. As part of this plan
4 we have to host public forums in order to build a vision.

5 We need to figure out where we want to be in five, ten,
6 fifteen, twenty years from now. The plan that we create
7 will serve as a road map from where we are today to where
8 we want to be.

9 The plan has to establish clear and measurable goals,
10 which are taking intravenous steps in the strategy to get
11 from where we are to where we need to be; we need to create
12 methods to measure our progress. I can imagine the
13 Governor calling me up and saying, how are you doing? You
14 said you were going to be there and are you there, and when
15 are you going to get there. So we need to create clear and
16 measurable goals to assess our progress.

17 Also, the purpose of the forums is to engage in open
18 dialogue with the public. You need to specify your issues
19 and concerns that you face -- that we face collectively,
20 and we need to identify strategies to move Connecticut's
21 economy forward. And I encourage you to think big and
22 think outside the box.

23 Imagine if you were king or queen for a day, and you
24 could look into the future; how would you change
25 Connecticut? What would it look like? What would it mean

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1 if we had the best education system in the country? What
2 would it mean if we had the best transportation system in
3 the country? What would it mean if we had the most
4 affordable housing in the country? Guess what the topic of
5 issues we're here about are? What would that look like?
6 Don't think about we can't do this, or how much would it

7 cost. What would that look like? So that's the kind of
8 visioning process I have in mind.

9 Clearly the subject here is -- the topic here is --
10 the issues fall into these major categories:
11 Competitiveness, the cost of doing business, which breaks
12 down into, among others, regulatory environment, taxes and
13 energy cost, housing, transportation, workforce
14 development, under which is education and all of that from
15 age three to postgraduate study and responsible growth and
16 development.

17 I think there's a conceptual framework for contracting
18 a plan. As I said, we need to figure out where we are, and
19 how we got there, and why are we where we are. And that
20 requires collecting a lot of data, and doing a lot of
21 analysis. And the process we're engaged in at the moment
22 is to build a vision of where we want to be, and the public
23 forums are part of that. We're going to work with a team
24 of consultants to help build this plan, and there will be
25 additional public outreach. There will be focus groups and

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1 a general survey of the public conducted by a survey
2 research organization.

3 Once we have that -- where we want to be and where we
4 are -- we need to build strategies on how to get there and
5 measurable goals and methods that will assess our progress
6 along the way. So this is my conceptual framework of how
7 we go about creating this plan.

8 As I mentioned, the forums are being transcribed by a

9 transcription service. The transcripts will appear on our
10 web site. I think the first four are up there, and it
11 takes about ten days to two weeks for them to appear. If
12 the RPA were here, they would present their segment in a
13 five minute segment. The public, including elected
14 officials, are limited to three minutes; you may speak more
15 than once. When you speak, be specific about the timeframe
16 you're talking about and the topic. As I said before,
17 think big and focus on the future.

18 Some people are reluctant to speak. They just come to
19 listen, and that's fine. If you have a brilliant idea in
20 the middle of the night and you have access to e-mail, you
21 can e-mail -- send me what you think, any time you think of
22 it. You may have discussions over dinner and have a
23 brilliant idea. So with that, and understanding that the
24 Bridgeport area Regional Planning Association is going to
25 present their segment in Stamford, I want to call Edward

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1 Lavernoi ch on behalf of Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch.

2 Please sit over there.

3 MR. LAVERNOI CH: I am Edward Lavernoi ch; I
4 am deputy director for the office of the City of
5 Bridgeport speaking on behalf of Mayor Finch, who
6 encountered the kind of emergency today that mayors
7 typically encounter. He wanted me to express a sincere
8 thanks to the DECD, Commissioner, you, Stan, for holding
9 this forum here in Bridgeport. We appreciate the
10 opportunity to provide input. We think that we have a

11 very interesting perspective to provide to your planning
12 efforts, based not only on our planning that we've
13 undertaken ourselves in recent years, but some of the
14 dividends that that planning has paid.

15 And I'm going to speak a little bit about the pulse of
16 those specific planning efforts and the kind of economic
17 activity we've seen as a result. Our goals in Bridgeport
18 are also meant to point towards a self sufficiency and
19 bring projects to the State of Connecticut. We generally
20 look for projects to introduce to the State with the
21 leverage that State dollars can give us all the big bang
22 for the buck, not only for the City, but for the region as
23 a whole.

24 We have some interesting strengths in Bridgeport. We
25 have a very strong middle class, perhaps compared to a lot

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1 of other large cities in the State; but along with that
2 comes a tax base that's very heavily dependant on the
3 middle class resident taxpayer. And that's something that
4 a lot of people don't fully appreciate about this town.

5 We've seen our business days over the last couple of
6 generations eroded by a lot of macro-economic courses that
7 have been beyond our control. This is, of course --
8 historically, Bridgeport is one of the dominant
9 manufacturing communities in the entire eastern United
10 States. When you're overly dependant on something like
11 that for an extended period of time, then you find all of
12 the fundamentals for all of the manufacturing -- the way

13 it's done, where it can be done, who's going to do it --
14 change. Then you have some unique challenges as you try to
15 find the next thing to earn your daily bread.

16 I want to speak a little bit about the specific
17 planning efforts that we've undertaken in recent years, and
18 I'm going to talk about the type of economic activity that
19 we've seen result from what we think has been a good
20 effective planning, then I'll make some closing remarks
21 that the Mayor wanted me to make this evening.

22 In 2005 the public and private sector brought your
23 plan to the City to evaluate the City's economic
24 development strategy. They called for a comprehensive
25 overall emphasizing projected market forces, preempted

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1 oriented development, energy conservation and open and
2 transparent government that resulted in a number of task
3 forces that came up with specific action steps. I'm
4 pleased to report that the majority of those action steps
5 have been initiated, and the ones that have not are still
6 foremost on our priority list of things that we have to
7 do -- we have to get done.

8 In addition, over the past two years Bridgeport has
9 committed over a million dollars to develop a new
10 comprehensive development strategy. This is a requirement
11 of the US Department of Commerce and the Economic
12 Government Administration. We've relied on research --
13 market research that's been provided by a number of
14 reputable firms in the northeast -- Urbanomics (phonetic);

15 Parker, Fish, Jack Mar Associates; Dan Tech (phonetic);
16 Christ, Philip, Shapiro and Associates; and the Regional
17 Planning Association wanted the DECD to know that
18 everything we have accumulated and paid for in this process
19 is yours, if you want it; all you have to do is request it,
20 and we'll be pleased to offer that to your planning effort.

21 Through these efforts we have an updated master plan
22 and a new plan for compensation development is scheduled
23 for approval by the planning and zoning commission later
24 this month. It calls for an intensive reduction of
25 Bridgeport's carbon footprint. That's a cause that's near

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1 and dear to one senator who is still senator -- I guess for
2 the time being -- and now Mayor Finch, and he's let us know
3 that there is no greater priority in his administration,
4 other than being a local leader in environmental causes,
5 specifically the reduction of the City's carbon footprint.

6 To date, we have completed a downtown master plan and
7 a strategy emphasizing the policies for development. The
8 State's first transit oriented development for urban
9 village zone will be submitted to the planning and zoning
10 commission next month. This is in direct response to the
11 Governor's call for responsible growth for new
12 redevelopment. I want to emphasize the project that we're
13 submitting to DECD, and other State agencies for
14 consideration, whether it be for funding for regulatory
15 approval or all projects that we feel are consistent with
16 these set forth by Governor Reil to respond to growth and

17 sustain development.

18 The new zoning map and the updated regulations that
19 will flow from the master plan process are expected to be
20 considered in public forums this spring. It is anticipated
21 that the master plan policies will be put into clean
22 regulatory parameters for the invested community. We
23 anticipate the tenets for green development, workforce
24 housing, transit oriented development, Brownfields for
25 remediation, reduction of the City's carbon footprint.

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1 We'll also have a storm water management manual that will
2 address the important and vital issue state of this
3 waterfront community. Green -- the City of Bridgeport is
4 one of the top priorities of the Mayor's administration, and
5 he believes this will go hand in hand on everything that
6 has to do with the economic development, both in terms of
7 policy and actual project work.

8 In anticipation to the regulatory environment that
9 we're trying to create, we're investing heavily in
10 technology to an enterprise through a graphic information
11 system that is now operational in relevant capacities each
12 and every week, and we soon expect permanent management
13 software to track the development that is currently
14 underway.

15 As a result of this planning and these steps that
16 we're taking to improve the City's infrastructure, it's the
17 ability to accommodate development here, we are happy to
18 say that we've got about two billion dollars in mixed use

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19 of development that is currently headed our way, either
20 starting right now or far along the planning stages.

21 Later tonight you will hear, I believe, from Paul
22 Tempanelli, from the Bridgeport Regional Business Council,
23 on the progress of one of those future regional economic
24 development strategy. This will be the first regional
25 segment, we believe, in Fairfield County. We all

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1 acknowledge that we have much work to do in the region to
2 catch up to the efforts of some of the other regions in the
3 State, but be assured that our Mayor, in working in
4 cooperation with the Business Council, is going to pursue
5 this plan with the other communities in Fairfield County in
6 the interest of achieving the common scale, and encouraging
7 the kind of development that is consistent with the
8 Governor's vision for smart growth and sustaining
9 development.

10 Just to mention a couple of projects -- and certainly
11 we're willing to interact at DECD at any time to talk about
12 these project's components, what we think they're going to
13 do for the region and the State as a whole, and where they
14 seem in general -- the steel point project, the project
15 proposal -- Nancy's project proposal, the town development
16 project that is expected to occur on the lots and the
17 diminished land around the ball park of the arena. The
18 components of that policy are coupled by a national fund
19 and the Canyon Johnson Urban Fund. And you're also aware,
20 from your direct funding, the down to north project and the

21 other projects taken on by urban green in our downtown
22 area.

23 The Mayor also wanted me to mention tonight the
24 improvement of Bridgeport schools are also the main goal.
25 And the revenues came directly from our urban progress

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1 specifically to improving the schools and the education
2 system. As I think most people in the state government
3 knows, we are in the process of taking on the service of
4 three schools that were built, put into service before
5 1900. And those were our most critical needs, in terms of
6 our education infrastructure -- our physical education
7 infrastructure. We have several other schools, that will
8 require significant upgrade, that will be producing
9 students that will compete in the twenty-first hundred
10 milestone.

11 I was asked by the Mayor to point out that there are
12 planned documents that are available on the web at WWW dot
13 Bridgeport master plan dot com, and also at the City's web
14 site, which you can get by just Googling the City of
15 Bridgeport.

16 The Mayor wanted me to close by pointing out that
17 investments that the State makes in Bridgeport have the
18 potential to leverage for more project investments, perhaps
19 in any other urban center in the city. Bridgeport
20 certainly has its challenges in terms of Brownfield, in
21 terms of the environment, but we also sit on the edge of a
22 vigorous economic marketplace in the Fairfield County, and

23 we tend to feel that projects here need less in terms of
24 State investments.

25 We need to be spread around, but we need less in terms

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1 of State investments than some of the projects that might
2 be proposed in other areas, just because the private
3 marketplace has no other choice in Fairfield County but to
4 move up the line and start looking at Bridgeport as an
5 investment option. We still feel that there are companies
6 that flow our way, just by virtue of our location, that are
7 eager to take advantage of the economy, so they can
8 realize -- in terms of the labor force, in terms of real
9 estate, in terms of our access to the labor market in the
10 Naugatuck Valley and Eastern Connecticut shoreline.

11 I just want to say: On behalf of Mayor Finch, again,
12 thank you for the opportunity, Commissioner, and we're very
13 cooperative in any way in providing any information that we
14 might have that's of service to you, and to participate in
15 any way as you develop this State plan.

16 MR. MCMI LLEN: Thank you, very much. I'd
17 like to call Alex Soule.

18 MR. SOULE: I'm not here to speak.

19 MR. MCMI LLEN: I'd like to call John
20 Harri ty.

21 MR. HARRI TY: Good evening. I'm John
22 Harri ty; I'm a representative of the machinists union, and
23 director of a program called Growjobs Connecticut, which
24 brings together a business labor community and elected

25 officials on trying to keep manufacturing jobs in the
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1 State of Connecticut. And I would say if there's one over
2 arching message that I would like to give is that we need
3 to do what we can to maintain and to expand manufacturing
4 in our State. These are good jobs.

5 We have eleven percent of employment in our State and
6 over eleven percent of the State's gross domestic product.
7 There's policy that we can undertake that'll either help or
8 hinder manufacturing, and I really hope that in looking at
9 the long term, we're looking at this component of our
10 economy remaining with us. It requires us being much more
11 aggressive in a fiercely competitive climate.

12 Some points in regards to that that I would make in
13 trying to keep within the three minutes, I'll edit my
14 remarks. One issue is support for the field cell industry
15 in Connecticut. Right now, Connecticut has thirteen
16 percent of global employment in the field cell industry.
17 If we retain anywhere near that percentage, we're talking
18 about fifteen to thirty thousand jobs in the next decade of
19 Connecticut, but it is fiercely competitive.

20 Other states and other countries are knocking on the
21 doors of Connecticut companies all the time trying to lure
22 them away. If we want to help this industry stay here, we
23 need to help it reach its commercial potential, and we will
24 reap those benefits. If we don't do that, then someone
25 else will. And in that regard, right now in particular, it

1 impacted Bridgeport; the Department of Public Utility
2 Control has issued a draft decision on project one hundred
3 or one-fifty, which rejects three important field cell
4 projects, two of which were slated for Bridgeport and one
5 for Danbury.

6 The DECD is not final until January 23rd, so there's
7 time to weigh in on this. Is a critical blow against the
8 industry, in my opinion. If I was another state, I would
9 use that draft decision as a way of saying, look, come here
10 we can do much better. And I would urge the Commissioner
11 to take a look at that issue and talk to some folks in the
12 industry. In fact, I think that the State Capital and the
13 LOB should be run by the field cell industry; I think that
14 would be a great way of showing our interest.

15 A couple of other points on incumbent training
16 dollars; if you look at Massachusetts, they spent twenty
17 four million dollars last year; Rhode Island, which I
18 believe is still smaller than us, spent over eight million
19 dollars while Connecticut spent five hundred thousand
20 dollars. These are smart training dollars that keep people
21 at work and keep businesses in business. We really need to
22 do something about that, and we can do that at this
23 legislative session.

24 There's a number of training issues, and I know you've
25 heard about them, and they're in my remarks, but technical

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1 schools, apprenticeships, these are wise investments
2 especially when manufacturers are saying they can't get
3 enough qualified help. Maine has just adopted a college
4 loan reimbursement program for state university graduates
5 who stayed in the state over a period of time. They have
6 the same problem that we do, which is people get a degree
7 and they leave the state. What they did, they calculated
8 that if over time they forgive college loans, they keep
9 these people in the state and reap more tax benefits than
10 they're spending out in the program. I think it's a great
11 idea that we should emulate.

12 We need to look at health care. Outside of energy,
13 health care costs are the number one concern of Connecticut
14 manufacturers. I believe, personally, that we won't move
15 towards universal health care and every other
16 industrialized country has, but that's a big issue. In the
17 meantime, we, in this year, can open up the State employee
18 pool to private employers and save them significant amounts
19 of money. There's no downside to it. I really hope that
20 you'll consider that.

21 The State also could look at -- and a number of
22 manufacturers, especially small companies, are concerned
23 about this. International patents are expensive and
24 they're very complicated. A number of states provide
25 either legal or technical assistance or subsidiaries to

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2 maybe fifty or sixty countries around the world. And often
3 times you'll end up in legal battles, which a small company
4 is not really prepared to deal with. This is an area, if
5 we want to be a high tech innovative State, and we know
6 that small businesses are the driver of State economy, that
7 is something that we could look at.

8 I also believe that we should be an advocate on a
9 national level on behalf of the State for fair trade,
10 rather than the so-called free trade that small businesses
11 and certainly manufacturing workers have suffered severe
12 hardships due to the last fourteen years of the types of
13 trade deals that have been inflicted upon us. And I would
14 hope that we could address that issue.

15 Finally, two last points, the DECD needs to consider
16 more well-defined packages of incentives for companies that
17 are looking to relocate to the State. I was involved and
18 am involved in trying to get someone to come into the
19 Winchester State facility. The State is saying that we
20 will help, but because no one knows exactly how, it makes
21 it difficult to bring somebody in.

22 And the last thing, and I know that you've heard this
23 in other locations, but we're a great State; we've got a
24 lot to offer, but it can be incredibly frustratingly,
25 lengthy to do permitting and other kinds of regulatory date

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1 keeping functions in this State. And there is often a
2 culture of no, rather than how can I help make this happen.
3 And we've got a bad reputation in terms of investors as a

4 result, which is somewhat unfair, but is somewhat a result
5 of everyone trying to make the safe decision, rather than
6 trying to make things happen here.

7 So I really applaud you for having forums, and I
8 really hope that one of the things that you take on is how
9 do we allow these agencies to function, but at the same
10 time get things done, so that we can do some job creating.
11 Thank you.

12 MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you. David Kooris.

13 MR. KOORIS: Thank you for the opportunity
14 to comment this evening, and thank you, Commissioner, for
15 personally being here to hear our comments. My name is
16 Dave Kooris; I'm the Connecticut director of the Regional
17 Planning Association, a nonprofit planning group that
18 covers the thirty-one county tri-state metropolitan region
19 for eighty years.

20 There are many serious economic challenges presently
21 here in Connecticut in the economic development process for
22 the coming decades to the effort of formulating a
23 comprehensive economic development strategy and the
24 opportunity to immobilize and coordinate a safe department
25 and agencies to address the State's severely congested

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1 transportation system, lack of diversified affordable
2 housing options, high energy costs, excuse me, and threats
3 to environmental equality.

4 Specifically, I'd like to address four points. First,
5 all policies made by the State should be examined to

6 determine whether or not to capitalize on investments of
7 previous generations and ensure that future investments
8 will become the long range of the economic viability of the
9 State's community.

10 The State's transportation and community
11 infrastructure are the physical representation of hundreds
12 of years of investments in Connecticut. Roads, train
13 lines, sewers, storm water pipes, treatment plants,
14 libraries, schools, hospitals, municipal facilities
15 embodies a phenomenal amount of capital and every effort
16 should be made by the State to ensure that they're utilized
17 to their maximum capacity. Every additional dollar spent
18 bringing our roads and bridges into safe repair is a dollar
19 well spent, though each dollar spent increasing the road
20 network into the (unintelligible) is a dollar wasted.

21 While we should target the most severe bottleneck in
22 congestion points in the State's highways and interstates,
23 the focus of transportation spending should be on expanding
24 the State's transit network, improving connectivity between
25 transit modes and enabling transit oriented development.

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1 We recommend the formulation of trans agency to focus
2 on the expansion and operation of the State's train and bus
3 system. Our real estate and development arm within this
4 organization should be tasked with the redevelopment of
5 properties owned by the State within walking distance of
6 the transit service, and with the provision of adequate
7 parking to service the State's rider's demands without

8 sacrificing pedestrian environments surrounding those
9 stations.

10 The State has a (unintelligible) constellation of a
11 pedestrian scale, city, town and village centrics. The
12 infrastructure underlined downtown is often times designed
13 to accommodate a much larger population than those who live
14 and work there today. Priority growth areas should be
15 established, within which future State investment will
16 capitalize on existing infrastructure while State monies
17 will not be spent outside of these areas, where they would
18 foster costly development to be impossible to physically
19 maintain in the coming decades.

20 Second, reinvesting in the State's downtowns with an
21 emphasis on transit-oriented development should be viewed
22 as the next strategy growing the State's young professional
23 population. Connecticut is losing professionals aged
24 twenty-five to thirty-five with a greater extent than any
25 other state.

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1 As the State's population continues to age and the
2 cost of supporting the increasingly elderly and retired
3 society involves a dominant component of Connecticut's
4 spending, growing a State's working population should be
5 viewed as a primary component of an economic development
6 strategy. Looking at those locations that have been most
7 successful in attracting the young, well-educated
8 professionals, strategies involved focused on the creation
9 of vibrant mixed use and acceptable downtown with the broad

10 range of housing options.

11 For too many decades, Connecticut has been focused on
12 a one size fits all development strategy, consisting of
13 automobile dependant, single family homes, and strict
14 commercial. The success of recent mixed use progress in
15 nearly every downtown along the New Haven line, and many of
16 the stations along the branch line, indicate that there are
17 significant pent up demand for an alternative development
18 type.

19 Downtown redevelopment has the potential to
20 simultaneously address the State's transportation, housing,
21 youth retention, the energy challenges. The State should
22 focus on creating an energy framework that limits the
23 amount of State dollars that literally go up in smoke or
24 sent overseas.

25 The emphasis on transit and oriented development will,

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1 in itself, greatly reduce the State's energy consumption
2 and carbon emission, but there are additional opportunities
3 to shift the supply for both renewable and local generated
4 sources. We lobbied for the Connecticut State energy fund
5 and we'd like to encourage continued cooperative efforts by
6 the State's department to reduce the State's energy
7 demands, and to provide alternative generation strategies,
8 and to look for opportunities to replace and decommission
9 the State's coal fired generating capacities with clearer
10 alternatives.

11 And, finally, an environment that's cleaner and enable
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12 opportunities for recreation will make Connecticut a more
13 attractive place to live and work, and drastically reduce
14 the health costs associated with poor environmental
15 qualities. We hope that ours and other comments at these
16 listening sessions have been helpful to the department, and
17 we look forward to the job report.

18 MR. MCMI LLEN: Thank you, very much.

19 Robert Fishman.

20 MR. FISHMAN: Thank you and
21 congratulations, Commissioner, and welcome to Connecticut.
22 My name is Robert Fishman; I'm president of the
23 Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition, known as
24 CIRC, and also the executive director of the Jewish
25 Federation Association in Connecticut. I want to address

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1 three areas of concern to myself, as well as these two
2 nonprofit organizations.

3 The first is as active members of the Connecticut
4 Association of Nonprofits, we completely support their
5 efforts to promote an understanding in our State that the
6 approximately twenty thousand registered nonprofit agencies
7 employ over a hundred and sixty-five thousand people in
8 Connecticut. This represents almost twelve percent of the
9 State's labor force, and it should be seen and heard as a
10 vital component in this discussion on enhancing responsible
11 economic growth in our city.

12 In my cases, nonprofits operate like a business and
13 provide value added to the State's economy, but are often

14 overlooked and not invited to sit at the table in the
15 critical discussions of economic growth. We advocate that
16 Connecticut provide adequate funding, as well to allow the
17 nonprofits to preserve core services that they provide and
18 to increase demands for services and properly fund higher
19 energy, medical and other insurance costs.

20 In terms of the comment about thinking out of the box,
21 it dawned on me; I have a young son who is a business
22 volunteer in Boston. And one of the projects -- actually
23 the project that he's working on is WiFi and computers for
24 a five hundred unit nonprofit housing in South Boston. And
25 I'm proud of what he's doing, but I haven't heard that

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1 Connecticut is also looking at WiFi and I'd like to make
2 that suggestion.

3 And quickly on the topic of Vista, one of the things
4 that perhaps Connecticut could look at is increasing the
5 number of Vista slots here in Connecticut that could help
6 us in the nonprofit sector, especially if Connecticut could
7 provide some housing assistance -- at least some housing
8 subsidies that would provide parents like me to feel like
9 I'm a Vista too, since I'm providing that substance to my
10 son.

11 Secondly, the CIRC, the Immigrant and Refugee
12 Coalition, which advocate for the immigrant and refugee
13 rights and also strives to promote the value added that
14 refugees and immigrants bring to their communities. We
15 want to make sure that the department knows that at least

16 ten percent of Connecticut's population is foreign-born,
17 and, of that population, the median age is far younger than
18 the American-born residents of Connecticut.

19 Therefore, we in Connecticut should be looking to
20 properly educate this new American population in our
21 schools, to help them become productive workers in our
22 State. Federal government guarantees public education
23 through high school for both legal and undocumented
24 immigrants. However, each state has the right to determine
25 if it will grant in-state tuition to the children of

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1 undocumented immigrants.

2 Here in Connecticut we've advocated for the last six
3 years, and finally the House and the Senate in Connecticut
4 overwhelmingly voted to support a bill to provide State
5 tuition to these children who were undocumented. But we
6 were disappointed when the governor vetoed that piece of
7 legislation.

8 I would like to see that the business community sees
9 this as a smart growth, because these are the young people
10 who intend to stay here, will provide for their families,
11 will be the next generation, and it makes sense to continue
12 their dream to get a higher education here in the State of
13 Connecticut, so that they can stay here. Some of them are
14 even valedictorians in their high schools here. And the
15 request to continue their dream, we think is important.

16 Every Republican -- although, most of us are following
17 their primaries -- even Republican Candidate Mike Huckabee

18 supported and signed a legislation to allow the children of
19 undocumented parents to receive in-state tuition in the
20 State of Arkansas, other states have done it; it's time for
21 Connecticut to do it, as well.

22 Finally, Connecticut, in my judgement, has not kept up
23 with other states in the field of globalization. Our
24 Department of Economic and Community Development in past
25 years have cut funds to those critical international trade

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1 programs. And when they existed, we saw, actually,
2 increases in the State's share of international trade.

3 Some of that international trade continues regardless,
4 but JFACT, Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut,
5 believes Connecticut should restore funding for commissions
6 such as the Connecticut Israel Exchange Commission. When
7 in operation, with less than a hundred thousand dollars
8 from your department, it created many business connections
9 between Connecticut and Israel, a small country, an
10 international leader in the field of technology,
11 pharmaceuticals and biomedicine.

12 And it seems to me that if there's a possibility for
13 DECD to consider trips overseas for business communities in
14 ten different parts of the world over a two year period, it
15 would only benefit the State, in the sense of increased
16 business opportunities. Some of that happened before, it
17 seems to have been cut down to almost nothing. In fact,
18 the last trip that I heard about was when Bradley Airport
19 opened a relationship with KLM, which will probably provide

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20 more businesses in Connecticut and Holland.

21 Thank you for your time, and we hope we can continue a
22 good relationship with you.

23 MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you, sir. Rab
24 Thornton.

25 MR. THORNTON: Welcome, Commissioner. On

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1 behalf of the Housatonic Community College and the
2 community college system in Connecticut, I want to welcome
3 you and to reaffirm a long-standing relationship we have
4 had with you and hope to continue with you, as well.

5 It's greatly important, in my mind, that we address
6 the workforce issues of the State, and I see no better
7 place to start than the college system here in
8 Connecticut. We have the resources and we have the desire,
9 and we'd like to work with you as best as we can. We are
10 doing a number of different things; just to let you know,
11 Commissioner, we have -- and in the past, we have done
12 programs -- you'd helped us for that -- and they have
13 return investments, I think, very well and address a number
14 of issues from the speaker that the Commissioner had talked
15 about before.

16 That's the tip of the iceberg. I think what we'd like
17 to do is expand that kind of work to go into any number of
18 different clusters. And I look forward to working with you
19 as to how we do that. The key to that is through the
20 technical college systems; they pride themselves on the
21 fact that we have helped people stay in Connecticut. We're

22 Housatonic Community College; our graduates stay here, they
23 work here, they are nurses at Saint Vincent's Hospital,
24 they are nurses at Bridgeport Hospital, they are machinists
25 in town, they work for engineering, they work for other

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1 companies here.

2 The main thing that we see is that they are tremendous
3 and talented individuals. And whether they're first,
4 second, third or fourth champs, or whether they are simply
5 recognizing the benefit to coming to a community college
6 and the generosity of the taxpayers of the State of
7 Connecticut, and the support that they give us, and then
8 transferring on to any number of articulation agreements
9 that we have, the goal that we want is a seamless approach.

10 We want to be able to listen to the students, we want
11 to be able to hear what they have to say, we want to be
12 able to fit them into the jobs, the demographics that are
13 available and are needed, both for now and in the future,
14 and we want to do that as a partner, not by ourselves. The
15 key thing we found here is that when coming down to the
16 Bridgeport Research Center, and first talking to Chris
17 Orchard in engineering -- in start (unintelligible)
18 manufacturing all their lives there -- that wasn't going to
19 work unless we had a small business organization, we had
20 companies together, we had CEOs, we had DECD and the like.

21 So as we look forward to this, one of things that we
22 were eager, Commissioner, is how we put together
23 partnerships that are realistic, that are done within a

24 timeline assessment, that we can look at from the value
25 point and improve upon. We had some very, very good

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1 starts, but where we sit in the community college system,
2 particular Housatonic Community College, we don't look at
3 it as a problem, we look at it as a wonderful opportunity
4 to serve.

5 And so to end, as we work with you, we appreciate your
6 coming here, we look forward to doing that, and anything
7 that we can do; I think I speak for the president and the
8 other members who are also here. Thank you, very much.

9 MR. MCMILLEN: Meghan Lowney.

10 MS. LOWNEY: Commissioner McDonald, Mr.
11 McMillen, thank you for inviting comments from the public
12 as part of your strategic planning process. My name is
13 Meghan Lowney; I am a Fairfield resident, and I've been
14 working to end homelessness in the greater Bridgeport area
15 for the last twenty years. And despite twenty years of
16 work with many others working for homelessness,
17 homelessness persists. We have homelessness every day and
18 far too many of your neighbors don't have a place to call
19 home even tonight.

20 Thirty-three thousand people each year are homeless,
21 including thirteen thousand in the State of Connecticut.
22 Homelessness gets a lot of attention this time of year when
23 calls come in wondering about whether people are going to
24 be outside in the cold. And while that is obviously a
25 great concern, the great cause of homelessness has nothing

1 to do with weather and everything to do with economics.

2 Homlessness in Connecticut is extreme poverty, an
3 economics crisis for individuals that are nearly impossible
4 to overcome without a helping hand. The good news is
5 affordable housing is the answer, and Connecticut can do
6 more to help.

7 Ten years ago, a former client of mine came to the
8 emergency shelter with her two children, six and eight
9 years old, for help. And homeless had, at this point,
10 caused Maria despair, seven years of loss, including loss
11 of marriage, loss of jobs, loss of sobriety. While in our
12 shelter, she did everything in her own power to stabilize
13 her life. She got two jobs and eventually began to rebuild
14 her life with her children. She was still unable to afford
15 an apartment in the greater area of Bridgeport.

16 It was terrific that they were doing well in the
17 shelter, but they were doing what they were doing in a
18 shelter; eating in a shelter, sleeping in a shelter, doing
19 homework in a shelter. The family eventually got the break
20 they needed. First, they rented an apartment that was
21 afforded to them where Maria paid thirty percent of her
22 income towards rent. This afforded her the opportunity to
23 get on her feet.

24 After a few years in that apartment the children
25 stabilized in school, she stabilized at work, and, in fact,

1 went to community college and increased her income. After
2 those years she got a better job and was able to buy a home
3 through the affordable home ownership program and through
4 the help of her family.

5 This is a tremendous success story, but still it took
6 ten years. I stood recently on her porch, and after a
7 visit her daughter, who is now eighteen, said, "this has
8 been wonderful and I'm so proud of my mom, we've lived in
9 this house so long."

10 I said, "how long?"

11 She said, "three years; it's the longest time I've
12 ever lived anywhere." The stepping stones and the helping
13 hands that Maria had relied on and used well were critical,
14 but it took too long for her to achieve that success. And
15 while homeless projects are keeping their housing day to
16 day, so many of our neighbors would benefit with new units
17 of affordable housing now. If more local families could
18 afford housing and keep their housing, all of us would
19 benefit, as neighbors, as employers, as a community and
20 business owners.

21 As a consultant and employer myself, I know firsthand
22 how difficult it is, for example, to find and keep
23 qualified people. Often the cost of living, especially
24 here in Fairfield County, is just an insurmountable
25 barrier. As a serious committee member -- I'm from

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1 Connecticut -- in a campaign to increase the number of the
2 affordable housing units in the State, I was alarmed to
3 learn about this strain and drain which has occurred. We
4 are losing more of the twenty-five to thirty year old
5 population than any other state in the nation. And that's
6 a trend that continues to this day.

7 I was further surprised to learn, despite my
8 background, that a hundred and forty -- fifty-four of our
9 hundred and sixty-nine municipalities are not affordable to
10 people earning a median income. They could not afford a
11 median house sale amount on their medium incomes. This is
12 not working.

13 Tonight I'm here to ask you to respond to this crisis
14 by prioritizing affordable housing development in your
15 economic strategic plan. Three ideas: Prioritize the
16 development of new affordable housing. The Legislature
17 took a great step in passing the Home Connecticut Bill,
18 which in Connecticut has programs for economic growth.
19 Please help us get started with that, or get the funds that
20 we're asking for. And this is a wonderful bill, because it
21 provides municipalities to include in its own plan.

22 We further need additional funds, in this session and
23 beyond, to expand this program and to really go to scale.
24 Support the development of housing for the lowest income in
25 mixed units; that is, mixed incomes within one building or

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1 in neighborhoods. Permanent support of passing this bill

2 has been a wonderful answer to some of the people who were
3 homeless where they get services at their housing unit.
4 This is a great way to go forward in ending homelessness.
5 We need ten thousand units in the State of Connecticut to
6 end homelessness; we have three thousand built or in the
7 pipeline already. Let's do it by 2014.

8 Increase the pace of development, as you heard from
9 another speaker. This is agonizing for so many developers.
10 I implore you to work with other State departments and try
11 to see what we can do so that this planning and development
12 can happen faster. Create a streamlined loan
13 application -- perhaps through it's mass dot com program --
14 and the approval process and a dependable source of
15 financing so that developers can count on it, plan on it
16 and take advantage of opportunities that come up. Let's
17 reduce the time that it takes folks like Maria to open
18 their doors to the future.

19 And, finally, support local planning efforts. Towns
20 like mine -- in Fairfield -- are very interested in a home
21 Connecticut legislation, very interested in resolving the
22 crisis of affordable home ownership in town. And there are
23 complex, challenging development decisions that need to be
24 made. Many towns need assistance from outside partners in
25 order to make the decisions and to keep the planning that

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1 would put us in a proactive stance in terms of including
2 affordable housing.

3 Our crisis affects so many people in so many

4 communit ies. And I thank you, very much for the
5 opportunity to suggest some opportunities that we might
6 pursue.

7 MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you, very much. Ken
8 Oppedisano.

9 MR. OPPEDISANO: I won't be speaking
10 tonight. Thank you.

11 MR. MCMILLEN: Richard Tenebaum.

12 MR. TENEBBAUM: My name is Richard; I'm an
13 attorney with Connecticut Services in Bridgeport. I
14 supervise the housing work through our six offices in
15 Stamford, Bridgeport, New Britain, Waterbury, Willimantic
16 and New London, and I'm here to talk about housing.

17 Not surprisingly, if you're looking at an economic
18 housing development plan, I want to remind you of something
19 I think everybody in the room knows; and that is the
20 connection between stable housing, stable employment and a
21 stable education. If the young eighteen year old woman,
22 that she just talked about, was never in a place longer
23 than three years, had to change schools every time she had
24 to move, think of how much better she would have done if
25 she was in one school. And if she did very well despite

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1 that, she's a remarkable woman.

2 It's critical that you address the housing need as a
3 foundation of any long term plan. Now, in Fairfield County
4 and in Bridgeport, in particular, we see here nearly the
5 depository of the workforce housing for the entire region.

6 And to explain that is to look at the Stamford, Norwalk
7 metropolitan area, section eight, fair market rents. And
8 that is a rent that is below the forty percentile of rental
9 housing. For a three bedroom apartment, a family needs
10 approximately eighty-five thousand dollars to afford that
11 without the federal subsidy.

12 Well, if you're defining workforce, even up to median,
13 then it's not surprising that a family is not going to be
14 able to live in Stamford. Of course, in Bridgeport the
15 same apartment is going to require fifty-six thousand. And
16 that's going to cut out a lot of people that work in this
17 building. I can tell you it's a problem for my nonprofit
18 agencies to hire attorneys. We have lost several very
19 promising lawyers, because they enjoy eating and paying
20 their student loans. And they had to leave for higher
21 paying jobs.

22 In living in Fairfield County, much of this State
23 now -- which is an absolutely dysfunctional rental housing
24 market -- the key to workforce survival is publicly
25 assisted housing. Public housing stock, federal and state,

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1 the privately owned assisted housing stock, and the tenant
2 based housing subsidies. And you have a budding crisis on
3 your hands, as you already know, in that so much of that
4 stock is in jeopardy, either because it's full and needs
5 substantial rehabilitation -- and that's going to cost
6 money -- or in the case where a lot of the privately owned
7 housing, because it's subsidy contracts have come to a

8 subsidized mortgage and the owner might not want to renew,
9 because the market is so high.

10 It's critical that the State stand behind the housing
11 and preserve it, because for my clients that's the last
12 option. My clients are not working as nurse's aides, and
13 they're not making fifty thousand or forty thousand. So
14 the workforce goes pretty high, but it also goes pretty
15 low. And a great concern I have is how are we going to
16 preserve the public housing.

17 Just in Bridgeport -- the largest developer in
18 Bridgeport is a prewar development, quite old, needs
19 substantial rehabilitation. The only program around to
20 provide money is the federal loan six program, which is a
21 substantial funding, and the low income housing tax credit
22 program, which is the only one out there right now with
23 enough money to do the development on the kind of scale
24 that needs to be done.

25 And I have a particular concern, because Connecticut's

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1 housing finance authority, which determines the
2 allocation's plan for the housing tax credit, has just
3 propose a change in that plan that would cut Marina Village
4 out for any possibility of being able to get a home six,
5 because it changes the targeting of the competitive ninety
6 percent low income housing tax credits, such that points
7 that used to be awarded for service for low income are
8 being taken away, as well as service for larger families.

9 It also takes federal public housing and state funded

10 public housing owned by local housing authorities out of
11 the special class one priority, so that that source would
12 have to compete on the market, compete as housing for low
13 income and larger families that would be at a competitive
14 disadvantage for the credits. And they would probably
15 foreclose completely from qualifying for loan six money,
16 because financing has to be in place before the loan six is
17 approved, and there are time limits on the tax credits.
18 And the uncertainty of being unable to qualify for those
19 credits would put them out of competition for loan six

20 In addition, the Bridgeport Housing Authority has -- I
21 won't say promises or commitments -- has been assured and
22 preempted special class one status for the project across
23 from the ball park that Mr. Fishman had referred to, which
24 should include public housing. And under this proposal,
25 hopefully, the special class one disappears and that

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1 project will certainly disappear. And that's one of the
2 regular federal ACC public housing.

3 So we look at the possibility of losing Marina Village
4 completely. So I ask the Department to consider the
5 basis -- the need to preserve the subsidiaries.

6 MR. MCMI LLEN: Thank you, sir. Marilyn
7 Ondrashe.

8 MS. ONDRASHE: Good evening. My name is
9 Marilyn Ondrashe; I am the director of the Bridgeport
10 Child Advocate Coalition. And I thank you, very much, for
11 bringing this hearing to Bridgeport, and for going on the

12 road to really get citizen input with the development of
13 the next five, ten, fifteen years strategic plan.

14 Even though Connecticut is the wealthiest state in the
15 US, it's economy could be stronger. We have lost
16 manufacturing, replaced with service sector jobs, which are
17 low paying jobs. Our middle class is losing salaries and
18 losing ground over the last decade and a half, and we have
19 either the largest or one of the largest income gaps of all
20 fifty states in this country.

21 To me, the economy and public housing are about many
22 different things. Businesses cannot expand and will not
23 locate here if Connecticut cannot offer a qualified
24 workforce for them. And to me this means two things:
25 There is a real need to expand State's investment in

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1 workforce development, focus on those with the least job
2 experience and education. We need to really be
3 compensating our lowest income parents in, you know, dead
4 end, low paying jobs, who experienced a lot of job turnover
5 because of service sector jobs, to help them improve in
6 their basic education, and their literacy.

7 They need Adult Ed, they need GED preparation,
8 vocational training and post secondary education. Now, we
9 can continue them there, but if we don't start to help
10 these folks, they're not going to be able to be on the
11 career ladder at all. Now, also including education --
12 because today's students are the workers of tomorrow, and
13 they're the workers for the businesses across the State.

14 Bridgeport students are the students that will be
15 working, not only in Bridgeport, but in Fairfield County
16 and the next surrounding suburbs; so it becomes very
17 important to look at the quality of education in our city.
18 And I could tell you that in our city, there's as many as
19 four or five students attending federal schools.

20 Our urban school districts do not have the funding
21 that they need to provide small size classes to enable
22 students to do better, to provide qualified teachers for
23 every single class, to offer intensive remedial work for
24 those students who fall behind, to offer universal
25 preschools and to support services that are needed to help

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1 improve student academic outcomes.

2 These are critical, because these are the students who
3 are graduating and/or dropping out as we speak. And they
4 are either going to move into the workforce and help move
5 our State forward, or, ultimately, they're not going to
6 have jobs and become a cost to the State.

7 Although these are not that traditionally viewed as
8 part of economic development, providing the necessary work
9 resources for workforce development focus on those workers
10 who are at least educated, as well as investing the
11 resources to improve education are absolutely critical to
12 our State's economic future.

13 And I must say that other states have done much more
14 than Connecticut has, and they have moved forward to
15 address these needs, and I hope that in the plan that you

16 develop you will look seriously at these needs, because we
17 need to move forward and we need to match the best
18 practices out there. Certainly Connecticut, of all the
19 states in the country, have the resources to do this. What
20 we need is support and the will.

21 And then lastly, I want to touch -- and I'll do it
22 quickly, I heard the beeper -- on the importance of
23 addressing poverty. There is a State child poverty
24 prevention council. And its top issue in strategy is to
25 address child poverty by ending family poverty. Each and

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1 every one of these should be included in their report and
2 on the web site.

3 First and foremost, we need to pass a State earned
4 income tax credit. This not only helps lift some members
5 of families out of poverty, but the money is then turned
6 around and spent in the community; it helps those local
7 businesses and it boosts the State's sales tax commission.
8 So it is a good thing. We, also as a State, need to look
9 at how we maximize the number of families who are eligible
10 to apply for the federal earned income tax credit.

11 I remember a number of years ago, the City of Chicago
12 sent information out to every family in certain zip codes
13 and reached out extensively to maximize the number of
14 families getting the federal earned income tax credit
15 because they sat there and said, this could bring millions
16 of dollars back into the City of Chicago that will be spent
17 right here in our businesses. We need to look at those

18 kinds of strategies. We need to expand child care agencies
19 so that parents can work, particularly low income parents.

20 And I'm going to add my voice to the affordable
21 housing crisis in the State, but emphasize the need for
22 subsidized rental housing. When you look at Bridgeport,
23 our median income is thirty-seven thousand dollars a year.
24 There's virtually no housing that is being developed that
25 is affordable to families at or below that median. We need

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1 to address those families before they become homeless, and
2 then we pay on the other end for homelessness' purposes,
3 and for kids not doing well in school, and can't afford
4 health insurance, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

5 Health insurance needs to be expanded for the
6 underinsured and the insured, and we need to do outreach
7 for the current safety net programs. We don't have
8 everyone who's eligible enrolled in those, and that, again,
9 can help some families out of poverty and provide case
10 management to the highest risk families.

11 The cost of doing nothing costs our State billions of
12 dollars every year and we could put those billions to much
13 better use on the front end and we would urge that. And I
14 hope that your answer is that we should do that. And that
15 solutions for the human side of economic development would
16 be featured along with traditional economic development in
17 the report, because the human side can't be ignored, it
18 can't be overlooked. So I thank you, very much for this
19 opportunity to testify.

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MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you. Wayne

20

21 Valaitis.

22

MR. VALAITIS: Thank you. Good afternoon.

23

My name is Wayne Valaitis; I am the director of Literacy

24

Volunteers of Southeastern Fairfield County, a program of

25

FSW, Inc. We provide adult education and workforce

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1 development programs in the greater Bridgeport and Norwalk
2 area. I'd like to thank Governor Reil and the legislature
3 for enacting Public Act number zero seven two three nine
4 and its plan to ensure that economic growth reaches our
5 inner cities.

6

In addition to making productive use of the

7

Brownfields in our cities, you should also consider taking

8

advantage of the residents in our inner cities. It is

9

largely upon the immigrants, minorities and other

10

underemployed residents of our inner cities that the

11

foundation for economic growth rests. In empowering these

12

individuals to impact the economic growth in Connecticut, I

13

would strongly suggest that your plan include investments

14

in the workforce development, such as those in the

15

legislative request being presented by the Campaign for a

16

Working Connecticut.

17

The campaign's request of eight point five million

18

dollars will provide additional funding in basic education,

19

occupational skills training, career services, and

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incumbent worker training. These funds will provide four

21

thousand one hundred Connecticut residents with training

22 and development that will have a measurable impact on
23 Connecticut's workforce. For many inner city residents of
24 southwestern Connecticut, there exists a distinct
25 incompetence in mathematics, English, reading, writing and

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1 fluency.

2 Twenty-one percent of southwestern Connecticut's labor
3 force does not possess a high school diploma; that's thirty
4 thousand residents right here in Bridgeport. Nineteen
5 percent of the population of southwestern Connecticut is
6 foreign born; that's thirty-seven thousand residences in
7 Stamford. Twelve percent of the population speaks English
8 less than very well in southwestern Connecticut; and that's
9 seventy-seven thousand residents across southwestern
10 Connecticut alone.

11 While these statistics certainly present a challenge,
12 I would prefer to look at the individuals who embody these
13 statistics as an opportunity. This group could serve as an
14 economic asset for the immediate, as well as the future
15 economic growth. The Campaign has identified proven
16 strategies, such as our own Workskills Program. The
17 Literacy Volunteer's Workskills program blends vocational
18 skills and basic skills to prepare unemployed adults in
19 Bridgeport for employment in customer service and sales.

20 Over the past three years, after taking this eight
21 week training program, ninety-three percent of our
22 participants have received their certification in customer
23 service from the National Retail Federation. Seventy-four

24 of all participants have significantly improved their basic
25 skills, and sixty-seven percent our participants alone have

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1 graduated and maintained unsubsidized employment.

2 This program, and many other programs, identified by
3 the campaign can be implemented immediately should the
4 State choose to invest in its economic future. To offer
5 some other statistics about the value of education in terms
6 of economic impact, according to the US Census Bureau, an
7 individual who earns a high school diploma or GED will earn
8 an additional two hundred thousand dollars in their
9 lifetime. An individual that has just some college -- not
10 an associates degree, not a four year degree, but just some
11 college, will earn an additional five hundred thousand
12 dollars in their lifetime. An investment in education and
13 training will pay dividends on many levels.

14 In summation, I applaud the Department of Economic
15 Community Development in developing the plans as called for
16 in Public Act Code zero seven two thirty nine. I strongly
17 urge to include in your strategic plan long-term
18 investments in workforce development initiatives, such as
19 those presented by the Campaign for a Working Connecticut.
20 Connecticut's economic success ultimately depends on its
21 ability to provide a highly skilled workforce. Investing
22 in Connecticut's inner city residents is one means towards
23 that end. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you
24 today.

25 MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you, Wayne. Paul

1 Tempanelli.

2 MR. TEMPANELLI: Good evening,
3 Commissioner. Thank you and Governor Rell for the
4 initiative for providing the opportunity to offer input,
5 to which is a long needed initiative to undertake in the
6 economic development planning process in the State of
7 Connecticut. My name is Paul Tempanelli, and I'm
8 president and CEO of Bridgeport Regional Business Council
9 with a one thousand member business membership
10 association, regional chamber of commerce and economic
11 support organization for the City of Bridgeport.

12 As everyone in the room knows, and I'm sure everyone
13 in previous economic forum knows, Connecticut's economic
14 growth, Connecticut's appeal as a place to do business and
15 Connecticut's appeal for our school's graduating population
16 as a place to live have each been sagging or declining over
17 the past few years. These conditions and trends are an
18 increasing concern to all of us, and are particular
19 concerns for the business communities that I speak for in
20 the City of Bridgeport and in different communities in the
21 State of Connecticut.

22 The path that you are now taking for our State in the
23 economic strategic plan for economic growth in our State,
24 is an encouraging first step. Without such strategic
25 thinking, we clearly will further lose ground to our

1 competition, we clearly will continue to stagnate and we
2 clearly will continue to lose businesses and lose people to
3 states that are more competitive and more business friendly
4 than we are.

5 As you continue this process, we ask you to bear in
6 mind the following five things -- that's not to say that
7 there's other things that you should not bear in mind, I
8 have no time to address them all -- the history of our
9 State and our traditions in Connecticut have molded us into
10 thinking in silos in many different levels. The whole
11 economy today brings us much different realities, and in
12 many ways we're unprepared to deal with those realities.

13 We need to think strategically much more now than we
14 ever had before. As two primary examples of our overall
15 thinking and development of this State's economic plan, we
16 need to consider the regional plans now in place around the
17 State that are about to get underway in our own one coast
18 region, for example, and thereby recognize our new economic
19 realities.

20 We need to serve as an overlay to your plan. Much
21 effort and much work has been put into these efforts and
22 you need to consider the work of these efforts. Important
23 and meaningful work has been done, and that work should be
24 reviewed, and be a part of your thinking. In our region,
25 for example, we are in the beginning stages of development

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1 and regional status that will include fourteen
2 municipalities through Stamford and Greenwich.

3 We are in our third program year of developing and
4 implementing supportive initiatives that define and market
5 our region in light of the economic reality. In addition,
6 we need to plan for our State's economic future in a much
7 more integrated fashion than we currently do. The critical
8 issues that are intertwined with the cost and the quality
9 of the availability of health care, the quality of our
10 educational system and the state of our transportation
11 investment are all directly related to what you're doing in
12 terms of creating an economic development plan.

13 They are intensely related and should not be addressed
14 in isolation from one another, as traditionally they have
15 been in our State. The plan that you are about to
16 undertake must develop and be recognized of these
17 relationships and must develop and recognize our essential
18 drivers of our economy, which include investment
19 transportation and includes investing in things such as
20 affordable housing.

21 Secondly, as you know, our State has developed some
22 tools that has enabled us to provide strategic capital
23 investments to help support our infrastructure needs, so
24 critical is the foundation for economic growth.
25 Unfortunately, over the years our capital investment

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1 process has, to a great degree, developed into a cookie
2 jar. More and more of the State Bond Commission, for

3 example, finds itself making investment decisions for
4 projects that, albeit, are working projects, but have
5 little or no direct economic impact on our State.

6 In a state that lags behind so many others in terms of
7 business growth, job growth and business retention, we need
8 to change our ways in investing and invest in projects that
9 demonstrate a return on investments. In 2006, for example,
10 the State Bond Commission made almost fifty investments in
11 projects that are strictly local in nature and have very
12 little or minimal economic return.

13 Investing in soccer fields, which is a worthy pursuit;
14 investing in town halls, which is a worthy pursuit;
15 investing in local fire houses, which is a worthy pursuit;
16 investing in local churches and senior centers; all are
17 worthy pursuits, but in my opinion have undemonstrated
18 economic return and should be funded through local or
19 private sources. Let us begin to invest strategically and
20 not invest based upon who speaks the loudest, or who has
21 the most influential state representative. Pork barrel
22 investment should stop and economic development should be
23 our mantra when it comes to investing strategically in any
24 State resources.

25 Third, any economic development plan that the State

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1 develops must recognize and deal with the critical human
2 resources issues that relate to our ability to attract,
3 retain and grow jobs. Investing in training and
4 retraining, and most important, investing in our public

5 education system to ensure that not only an equal right to
6 education exists, but a quality education exists is
7 paramount for our success. Governor Rell needs to be
8 commended for her bold initiative in 2007 to dramatically
9 increase the State's development in our public education
10 system.

11 The passing of the State's 2007 and 2008 budget was a
12 good start, but more needs to be done, particularly in
13 urban classrooms.

14 Fourth, this plan must be direct and forceful in its
15 position regarding the cost of doing business in the State
16 of Connecticut. Once again, our State's major business
17 association, CDIA, recently reported the results of the
18 annual survey of Connecticut's business executives, and
19 once again, the results are very slim.

20 A high cost of doing business continues through the
21 great cost of business success, and, therefore, job growth.
22 This plan must state clearly and unequivocally that
23 reducing the cost of business is one of its primary goals.

24 Fifth, as we know, the health care issue has been
25 studied to death, and as we speak there are no less than

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1 five high level analyses taking place with the Governor
2 initiated state legislature leaders. It is so critical to
3 our economic stability as a State that we know this issue
4 and this plan must again recognize the relationship between
5 the quality of our health care, the availability of our
6 health care, affordability of our health care and economic

7 development.

8 Creating a health care plan that's isolated from the
9 economic development plan is not to recognize a real
10 relationship between these things. Health care is a
11 primary and important driver of our State's economy, and
12 our economic development plan must also recognize that
13 reality and suggest doable strategies that will enhance
14 this area of economic opportunities.

15 Our providing system must be strengthened and
16 nurtured, and our issues must be allowed to develop in a
17 fair and competitive marketplace. If we leave you with any
18 mantra tonight, it is that the State's economic development
19 plan must be an integrated comprehensive plan and look at
20 all major State issues in a comprehensive way, and not in
21 silos as, unfortunately, we in New England are used to
22 thinking. Thank you.

23 MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you, Paul. That was a
24 good segue. The strategic plan is required to take into
25 account all of the segments, the State Planning for

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1 Conservation and Development, and all of the other
2 strategic plans that other agencies create or will create.
3 As you know, the Department of Transportation is currently
4 producing a strategic plan, the Department of Higher
5 Education is producing a strategic plan; all those plans
6 need to be taken into account, so why do we need another
7 plan? As you just said, we need an integrated plan, and
8 this plan will do that and more.

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9 MR. TEMPANELLA: Right. Thank you.

10 MR. MCMILLEN: Susan Davis.

11 MS. DAVIS: Good evening, Commissioner
12 McDonald and Mr. McMillen. My name is Susan Davis, and
13 I'm the president and CEO of Saint Vincent's Health
14 Services, and I'm also the first vice-chairman of the
15 board on the Bridgeport Council. And I want to thank you
16 for creating this opportunity for the public input into
17 the process for creating a State plan for economic
18 development.

19 First, representing Saint Vincent's Health Services,
20 one of our State's thirty nonprofit acute care hospitals,
21 and also representing Bridgeport's regional business
22 council, one of our State's regional chamber of commerce,
23 let me commend you both, as well as Governor Reil, for your
24 leadership and developing a strategic plan for economic
25 development in our State, something that I think we all

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1 agree is long overdue.

2 We urge you, in the development of this plan, to be
3 sure to develop its goals and strategies in a way that
4 integrates those goals and strategies with what needs to be
5 done in our State to improve things that we've talked about
6 this evening -- transportation, education, affordable
7 housing, workforce development, and an area that's near and
8 dear to my heart, health care quality, affordability and
9 access.

10 To attack these issues in isolation, as you have said,

11 will not enable our State to improve economically. Each of
12 these major issues are related, and any plan for
13 development needs to address these issues in a creative and
14 comprehensive way. That being said, let me concentrate for
15 a moment on some of the health care issues.

16 Saint Vincent's Medical Center is a three hundred and
17 fifty million dollar corporation with three thousand jobs
18 and a payroll of in excess of two hundred million. We are
19 one of two fine hospitals in the City of Bridgeport, and
20 Saint Vincent's and Bridgeport Hospitals are two of thirty
21 in the State of Connecticut with revenues in excess of
22 eighteen billion, and a payroll in excess of ten billion in
23 salaries and benefits, that provide support of the economy
24 in our local communities.

25 However, health care faces many challenges, and the

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1 Governor has recognized this by convening a number of
2 initiatives to address access in funding, as well as
3 training. However, the State under funded
4 Medicare/Medicaid systems has a significant economic impact
5 on our State. It causes providers to cost shift to payers
6 that provide services to private businesses, and they need
7 to then cost shift their cost onto that private business,
8 which has an economic impact.

9 Also the under funding of the Medicaid systems in the
10 State causes the State to lose an opportunity to access to
11 federal dollars. For every one dollar spent in Medicaid
12 dollars in the State, the federal government matches it by

13 one dollar. So for every dollar we don't spend, it's a
14 dollar lost for the economic community.

15 Secondly, access to care. Recruitment of health care
16 providers is a well-known problem; however, I like to focus
17 on a small part of that problem, not just the nurses, the
18 housekeepers, the pharmacists. Nationally, there's a
19 well-known shortage of physicians now, and is expected to
20 get smaller as we baby boomers reach Medicare age.

21 The cost of living, housing costs, increase in
22 malpractice impacts our ability to recruit physicians. We
23 also find that we're competing for physicians that are
24 looking for jobs in South Carolina, Florida, Texas, the
25 states that have lower malpractice costs and lower costs of

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1 living. The quality of health care affects both children
2 and adults, and access to health care has an economic
3 impact on businesses with lost productivity and the ability
4 of children to learn, grow and become productive members of
5 our workforce.

6 Creating an economic development strategy that invests
7 in transportation, education, workforce development and
8 affordable housing will help improve health care and enable
9 us to recruit health care providers, and improve health
10 care to the residents of the State of Connecticut that are
11 both uninsured and underinsured.

12 On behalf of Saint Vincent's and the business
13 community, I commend you for this initiative and hope that
14 by considering the needs of health care as a driver of the

15 State's economy, you will develop a comprehensive plan that
16 will help improve health care. I look forward to the
17 results of this plan, and thank you for this opportunity.

18 MR. MCMI LLEN: Thank you. Lee Samoni r.

19 MR. SAMONIR: Good evening, Commi ssi oner
20 McDonald. I'm here as a private citizen. I used to be on
21 the other side of the forum as chairman of the congress
22 commi ttee. It was always the other way around. It's
23 always very refreshing when I know we call it the road
24 shows when you come down to Fairfi eld County, and you get
25 a di fferent perspective and that's some of the things I

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1 want to address here.

2 First, I would like to give you my perspective of DECD
3 and some of my comments. I think you have a wonderful
4 organi zati on. I think you have a great group of people
5 working for you; the only thing that concerned me about
6 DECD and public systems is that one of the things on the
7 shel f -- and it's always very di ffi cul t to take them off of
8 the shel f, and I think that's something that needs to be
9 worked on, so we make sure that the business communi ty will
10 want to deal themsel ves wi th the thi ngs we have. Peopl e
11 really do get what they have and not j ust something that's
12 i n a brochure or whatever.

13 And I also -- the whole system wi th DECD that's
14 bui ldi ng a fi ne system that probably needs to be from
15 peopl e out of state, who look at our economi c development,
16 who really understand and get the benefi ts of what they

17 were promised. The other thing is with the policy
18 decision; when I first started in the legislature, the
19 jurisdiction was within the cities and towns community that
20 went to planning development.

21 And there was always a focus -- there was always an
22 emphasis on DECD to promote economic development in towns
23 and urban areas that needed it. That focus got lost
24 somewhere along the line, and it just becomes economic
25 development through economic development. And I think this

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1 is not just I come from Bridgeport, I think Bridgeport
2 should be a priority, but, by God, you're looking at a town
3 with the highest respective tax in the whole country, and
4 nobody seems to care.

5 One of the ways to get out of it is to create a tax
6 base where these essential partners can help, and it
7 doesn't seem to be any priority or any incentive, but those
8 are the reasons to come and develop those areas which we
9 need the most. And I think the policy that ignores that is
10 a policy that's doomed for failure. So I hope that when
11 you look at those things, you take into consideration that
12 the policies for economic development may not be effective.
13 For example, I was part of the Heritage Foundation; we
14 created an enterprise zone. The enterprise zone worked
15 good, but what we really need is economic sacrifice from
16 government taxes in order to get economic development.

17 And that kind of hurts whatever in development that
18 you will need to do. And then on top of that, you have

19 some adulteration of the towns that need it from -- going
20 from press municipalities to enterprises in the communities
21 so that you're not really promoting in areas where it needs
22 the promotion. So I think you have to rethink some of the
23 incentives that are out there.

24 I'm glad to see that some of the efforts that I
25 started were promoted on Brownfield. Governor Rell

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1 recommended Brownfield and DECD and other areas that I
2 think that even with the problems that were created,
3 there's not -- and this happens in other states; Louisiana
4 had a program similar to the enterprise, the Reinvest
5 Community Act where it may not be enough people taking
6 advantage of the wonderful tax breaks that are available,
7 it's because we're using tax credits from -- being a very
8 limited amount of taxes, like corporate taxes.

9 They don't really hit until you open it up to all
10 taxes. In other words, if you really want the program to
11 work for the tax credit and personal taxes, and not just on
12 a very limited market of what it is today. It's a great
13 program that some of the fine tuning may be in everyone's
14 interest. But I think that's important to -- the concept
15 that -- one of the things that needs to be addressed is the
16 totality of the taxes between the towns that goes into the
17 areas that need it the most. It's important to kind of
18 figure out a way so the towns can share in the tax space
19 that may alleviate that disparity and also promote some
20 growth.

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21 The other thing is that I come from a section of
22 Bridgeport known as Black Rock; we're located along the
23 water and there's a little sign -- there's this thing about
24 Long Island Sound. It talks about Long Island Sound -- it
25 used to be a fresh water lake and that the melting of an

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1 iceberg is what created Long Island Sound. When you look
2 at Long Island Sound, it might be another country as far as
3 we're concerned. Economic development does not just
4 consider Connecticut, it should be regional taking into
5 consideration needs of the transportation needs, economic
6 development needs, and the communities that lie -- that I
7 can see, but can't touch.

8 And I think that's an important area to start looking
9 at as far as our economic goal; it should be regional.
10 It's easy for Hartford and the other regions to don't
11 really see that, and I know where someone may regard it as
12 a different world -- like the Yankees over the Red Sox over
13 here -- but I think it's important that we look at it as a
14 community, and we take all of our assets that we might have
15 and use them.

16 Can you imagine what might happen if we ever got a
17 bridge or tunnel -- as always talked about -- through Long
18 Island? We can take out the transportation problems, we
19 can fix the transportation problems over there, we can also
20 include some of the economic development over there,
21 because with having transportation, you really need a
22 choice of roads -- which way you want to go. If we got

23 access to Long Island, we -- and it can be done, because at
24 one time you would say it costs the State too much money,
25 but if you prioritize them all -- I mean, it's happening in

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1 Chicago, it's happening in Indiana, but it's not happening
2 in Connecticut.

3 And the other thing that I want to emphasize is that
4 we kind of pride ourselves as being a heartland state. We
5 have no farmlands, we don't have the resource of coal, but
6 what we used to have was -- we used to use our brain source
7 in our region. We don't have the forty incubators, we
8 don't have the high tech zoo technology, we don't have the
9 high tech high schools, we don't have anything high tech.

10 If we really wanted to go high tech, then we need to
11 invest in the resources that will help the most. And I
12 think those are the things that are primarily important. I
13 just want to thank you for the opportunity to come here and
14 come talk to us, and I think we can do a lot together.

15 MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you. Kris Lorch.

16 MS. LORCH: Good evening. Thank you,
17 Commissioner McDonald for giving us the opportunity to
18 speak to you. We certainly appreciate the fact that
19 you've come to Bridgeport, in this area, and allowed us to
20 have some say in what's going on. My name is Kris Lorch;
21 I'm the president and owner of a manufacturing company --
22 proud of it. We have about fifty employees. We have been
23 in Bridgeport for fifty years.

24 I currently work with your -- with the DECD in a

25 number of different areas, mostly in the worker training.

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1 I worked with YDIA in one of their recent grants from the
2 Department of Labor, I'm on their advisory board for income
3 training. I am a member of the Bridgeport Chamber. I'm a
4 member of the SES Committee here in Bridgeport. I'm on the
5 Steering Committee for the master plan in Bridgeport. I've
6 been involved in economic development for the past ten
7 years, and the reason that all came about was because of
8 Kevin Dunn, who came here in 1998 and started the
9 Bridgeport Economic Resource Center.

10 He also interviewed a number of businesses in the
11 local area, and at that time my business was looking to
12 improve the education of its employees. From that meeting,
13 Kevin brought together about ten or twelve businesses and
14 started the Manufacturers' Educational Training Cluster,
15 which is still active and still has probably a dozen
16 businesses who actively promote the education of their
17 employees, who work together as a team in many different
18 areas to promote business in their region; and we're not
19 just in Bridgeport, we're also in New Haven, we're also up
20 the line in the Waterbury area.

21 Since 2003 we've each been coming together with many
22 more agencies or organizations that promote business; that
23 would be the Small Manufacturing Association, the New Haven
24 Manufacturing Association, as well as the agencies here
25 that promote business. Manufacturers are still alive.

1 People are trying to kill it off right and left, but we're
2 still here. We have jobs that pay much more than you can
3 get at Wal-Mart. We pay more than you're going to get
4 cleaning this building. Our average salary is between
5 twenty and thirty dollars an hour, and when we have work we
6 usually have lots of work.

7 So we haven't been killed off yet. And even though
8 most cities don't like to look at manufacturing as being a
9 base or primary part of their community, we are. We're a
10 viable part. We don't want to be killed off, but we also
11 want to let you know that we need these clusters to
12 continue. They've done wonderful things for the businesses
13 that have survived, and survival since 2003 has been a
14 goal. They have reinvented themselves. They had to
15 accommodate or die.

16 So we're still here, and we're living and we will go
17 on. But we would like to let you know that the cluster
18 initiatives have been a key to our success, in the fact
19 that they have been able to bring together businesses,
20 community leaders and the educational system. So two of
21 those branches of what makes cities possible and survive
22 and thrive is housing, jobs and education.

23 So we've been able to wring through the clusters the
24 education and the jobs on an active basis. All of the
25 businesses in the cluster -- the metal cluster are actively

1 involved with the vocational schools. They sit on their
2 crafts committee, they are knowledgeable to the fact that
3 they go to the schools, they call them when they have
4 employment needs. We're most active with Housatonic
5 Community College, because they were the first college
6 locally that came and said we will train your people, tell
7 us what you want.

8 We trained people in ESL. I have a group of people
9 now that I don't need a group of people to get together. I
10 don't need a translator, I can talk directly with my
11 employees. That alone is productive and has made us
12 helpful and prosper. So because we have provided many
13 businesses throughout the State with a means to education
14 and through resources, I'd like to see them continue.
15 Thank you.

16 MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you. Peter Hance.

17 MR. HANCE: Good evening. My name is Peter
18 Hance; I'm a resident of Meriden, a recent returnee to
19 Connecticut from the great State of Montana. I'm here to
20 speak to you about three things. My current position is
21 with the Bridgeport Housing Authority Regional Planning.
22 I want to speak to you about the status of the workforce
23 housing, the changing atmosphere for housing and the
24 request for action.

25 Being here -- a little bit about myself; I was a DEP

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1 employee before DECD. My former deputy commissioner, Bob
2 Santos here, working with my dear friend Chad, it feels
3 like being back home again. We would like to talk a little
4 about the need for affordable housing for workers. There's
5 obviously a need for new housing, because we're not keeping
6 up with the number of housing we need for the growing
7 population. That's pretty clear. But, more importantly,
8 at this point we have an aging portfolio out there of
9 almost thirty-four thousand public housing units that are
10 rapidly deteriorating.

11 These units are forty years old, fifty years old,
12 sixty years old. Our project here in Marina Village, for
13 example, was built so long ago it has no showers. We have
14 no way of putting showers in, they have small bathtubs for
15 a four bedroom unit, and that's it -- the one bathroom. We
16 have units that are boarded up in Ansonia, boarded up in
17 New Haven and in Hartford. A small amount of
18 rehabilitation funds will make these units livable at a
19 cost much less than building new, without disturbing the
20 existing neighborhood.

21 In terms of funding, originally DECD have been
22 responsible as you guys can be with DECD funds. You have a
23 strong statement in your plan, you continue to push it,
24 hats off to you. Unfortunately, the principal source of
25 funding is not from DECD, but tax credits. And,

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1 unfortunately, the agency responsible for tax credits have
2 not been as responsible.

3 Just so you know, there is a proposed change in multi
4 application plan -- I believe Richard may have spoken to
5 this already -- which lessens the incentives brought by
6 housing for low income, will lessen the incentives to
7 provide housing for low and moderate income, which lessens
8 the incentives for large families, lessens the incentives
9 to build housing cooperation with communities. It lessens
10 the incentives to build housing in cooperation with the
11 municipal redevelopment plans. They're taking points away
12 from all those areas, in terms of being able to do more
13 housing.

14 And it all but eliminates any possibility for
15 Connecticut to compete on a national level for all State
16 funds. This means New Haven, Hartford, Meriden,
17 Bridgeport, all of the major communities funded, they have
18 aging, obsolete, distressed housing that will not have the
19 funding source to repair those. There's additional talk
20 now we will move the tax credit program back over to DECD.

21 The last thing is a request. I'm asking you to do a
22 plan that has a strong unequivocal statement on the need
23 for housing for workers, to repair, to rehabilitate, to
24 replace this aging housing while it's still deteriorating
25 so quickly that pretty soon we'll lose the economy that we

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1 have. Secondly, we need a release for bond caps with the
2 dedication for a portion of that for housing so we can
3 leverage it against four percent credits, as opposed to
4 nine percent credits, filling the gap with State bonding,

5 equity bonds -- something so that they have a four percent
6 sales from a nine percent sales.

7 Last, we need the release on the stringent hold of
8 issuing bonds and encourage public housing authorities to
9 issue their own bonds up to a four percent credit. That
10 strong statement is critical to ensure the link between the
11 economic stability and housing for the workers staying
12 focused.

13 Our workers are basically for the health care service
14 and retail industries, which are the growing torches of the
15 State. Just a final note, and I say this from my heart, I
16 want to thank you both for being here, it makes a real
17 difference. Commissioner, you're here personally. You've
18 gone from community to community around the State looking
19 for comments. It's a mission to have a meaningful public
20 comment that makes a real difference. So, again, thank
21 you. Please take that plea for worker housing high and in
22 the final plan.

23 MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you. Alanna Kavel.

24 MS. KAVEL: Good evening, and thank you for
25 being here. I'm Alanna Kavel, deputy chief administrative

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1 officer for housing and community development here in the
2 city, as well as in Bridgeport. It's great to have you
3 here tonight.

4 Given that you're working on an economic development
5 strategy, one of the things I would like to emphasize for
6 you this evening is the fact that the State will only

7 experience continued economic growth if there are
8 sufficient housing options for our workers. Companies that
9 want to come to Connecticut must have affordable housing
10 for their workers. Firms simply won't come, stay or expand
11 here without housing that their workers can afford.

12 In addition, we have residents here that are
13 experiencing the costs of our rebirth, and they're
14 concerned about their ability to continue and stay in
15 quality, affordable developed housing here in the City.
16 According to the national low income housing coalition,
17 someone in the Bridgeport metropolitan area will need to
18 work almost three full-time jobs at minimum wage, at one
19 hundred and six hours per week, to afford a typical two
20 bedroom apartment here in the State.

21 Many of Connecticut's residents, and many in
22 Bridgeport in particular, are paying far above the
23 recommended thirty percent, as I'm sure you know, of their
24 income on housing. And we have many residents here that
25 are very concerned about that issue, in particular as

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1 Bridgeport experiences it's rebirth.

2 So I urge you this evening to really look at clearly
3 linking economic development strategy with good public
4 housing policy development, so that those residents of
5 Bridgeport, and those companies who wish to relocate to the
6 state, can both have affordable, quality housing options
7 available for their workers.

8 We just had a housing policy study done by Charles

9 Dimki (phonetic) -- which I think he shared with you,
10 Commissioner -- and he states in there that Bridgeport is
11 on its cusp of a rebirth. They went out to all of the
12 neighborhoods of our city and came back with the basic
13 premise that people are excited about the fact that we're
14 on the cusp of this rebirth. But people are also nervous,
15 and low and moderate income residents, in particular, are
16 nervous about their ability to continue to stay in quality,
17 affordable housing.

18 The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that
19 we've seen housing prices rise in the State seventy percent
20 since 2000. Wages have only risen thirty-three percent,
21 which is not insignificant, but it's clearly not enough to
22 keep up with burgeoning housing prices. And I heard Ray
23 Rosen speak this morning down in Stamford, and I saw
24 front -- Rob Ritney (phonetic) there from your office --
25 and she was saying that, you know, even though housing

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1 prices are falling a little bit, the jobs are continuing to
2 come here because people have housing options.

3 So companies will come to Connecticut as long as
4 workers can get in and out of the State quickly, as long as
5 they can get downtown quickly, which is clearly important
6 to us. So I ask that, as part of your economic development
7 strategy, you not only put housing policy development and
8 the coordination of housing and economic development
9 programs, but that you also make sure smart growth is a key
10 component of that strategy.

11 When I worked for the City of Norwalk; I think one of
12 the reasons we weren't successful in economic development
13 is because, unfortunately, companies couldn't get their
14 workers from Bridgeport to Norwalk to Stamford; so
15 companies started relocating to Norwalk, recognizing that
16 people can get there more quickly from Bridgeport. We have
17 a wealth of housing options here, we want to be able to
18 move workers in the surrounding county so that hopefully
19 they don't have to work almost three jobs in order to
20 afford a quality, affordable home care.

21 One of the things that we in Bridgeport compete for,
22 and are able to participate in, is the New Home Connecticut
23 Program. I think the approach of offering a carrot rather
24 than a stick is tremendous, and I'm hopeful that you're
25 going to get a lot of participation in that, not only from

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1 the major urban centers, but for many of the towns
2 throughout the State, because, as you know, the problems
3 that continue to increase, even with housing prices falling
4 and rates going up, and while municipalities may be working
5 on policies and putting programs in place to help
6 ameliorate some of that, we can only do it with your help.

7 And if we don't solve housing problem, we're not going
8 to solve the economic -- not solve, but we're not going to
9 further advance our economic developments agenda here in
10 the State. And we have so much to offer, we just need to
11 make sure all the parties are playing nicely in the
12 sandbox, and that everyone is coordinated in their approach

13 to both program development and funding.

14 And I think tying funding together will be a new
15 approach. You know, if someone comes in with an economic
16 development request, let's look at a smart growth
17 component, and make sure that all the pieces are there, so
18 that not only company benefits, but worker benefits and the
19 municipality in which the company is located and pending
20 benefits, as well. So thank you for being here tonight, I
21 know it's a long track and we're very happy to have you
22 here.

23 MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you, very much. Well,
24 those are all the people who signed up to speak. Is there
25 anyone else who would like to speak that didn't sign up?

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1 Please come forward and state your name.

2 MR. LYNCH: Good evening, Commissioner, my
3 name is Bernie Lynch. I'm here this evening representing
4 the Connecticut Venture Group, which is an organization of
5 investors, recent investors, past investors in
6 Connecticut. I'm also a past president, CEO of the
7 Greater Waterbury Regional Chamber of Commerce in the
8 business community in Waterbury. And, first of all, thank
9 you for the opportunity and, again, I commend you for
10 tracking around the State.

11 I think when developing an economic development plan
12 for the future, as you call it, your vision for the future,
13 one thing that you might want to do is take a pulse of the
14 people among you. As a business community looks at the

15 State of Connecticut, I think there's two trends which
16 could be worrying. The first one, last year Connecticut
17 for the first time had one point seven million in its
18 workforce, and that's the first time that the State crossed
19 the one point seven million.

20 But behind those statistics is another story. The
21 fact remains that private sector employment in the State of
22 Connecticut, in the year 2007, netted one hundred jobs over
23 the year 2000. So when we look back over the last seven to
24 eight years, it's been a net increase of one hundred sector
25 jobs in Connecticut, and that says something about how the

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1 State is operating.

2 Employment growth is actually a critical factor of the
3 regional State commerce and State economic development
4 committee stage. Another worrying factor is per capita
5 income. And on a relevant basis, Connecticut is obviously
6 a very affluent state; it's one of the highest tax incomes
7 in the country. For the last eight years the growth rate
8 of per cap income in Connecticut has lagged behind all the
9 other states in New England, which means that other states
10 are creating more higher value, higher paying jobs than we
11 are here in Connecticut.

12 And what's causing that? What's the source of that?
13 Those are the two things that I think business leaders and
14 investors would look at in terms of opportunities in
15 Connecticut. Why are those important? In the next twenty
16 years, Connecticut's workforce is going to decline in terms

17 of workforce population -- that's just the trend -- which
18 means that growth in the economy won't be favorable for
19 employment growth, so there will be less on better paying,
20 higher value jobs equivalent to per capita income.

21 And I think one of the focuses of the State's plan is
22 how can we support and arrive at that. And I think there's
23 a number of things. First of all, I think the State needs
24 to identify the key methods that are sustaining or
25 fostering job creation, particularly private sector

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1 creation. And how can that be done, and what is the
2 Workforce Development Association doing with that.

3 If we're looking for creation of higher value, higher
4 paying jobs, how can we support innovative higher value and
5 potentially higher technology sectors, information sectors,
6 and, particularly, what are the programs that are actually,
7 specifically, fostering that? Another suggestion is to be
8 bold and innovative, and really out of the box.

9 Connecticut has done a great job supporting cluster
10 initiatives for tax dividends, but I think the natural
11 extension of the cluster initiative is taking each of the
12 clusters and thinking about how they can procreate new
13 jobs. I think of how Connecticut supports financial
14 services clusters in Hartford, I think of the opportunities
15 of supporting and building incubators for emerging
16 technology companies in our distressed urban environments
17 in all the states that's available in our major cities at
18 bargain rates. Think about how creating incubator type of

19 activities would eliminate some of the disparity that we've
20 experienced in our town, in our cities, in our economy.

21 Those are -- I don't think are sustainable over the
22 long term if we're going to have a viable economy. I also
23 heard the issues about business costs, and the costs of
24 doing business in Connecticut. I think there's a need to
25 establish a relationship between the costs of business --

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1 of doing business in Connecticut, and the anemic growth
2 rate in the employment industry. Is it more than just a
3 coincidence that things that can be done are federal
4 issues.

5 And, finally, it's apparent that in the economy,
6 commercializing, licensing, technology transferring are all
7 critical components of creating higher value paying jobs.
8 How can those be facilitated? Well, what's the plan? If
9 our workforce is going to climb, how is the economy going
10 to grow by creating these higher value paying jobs.

11 And, finally, I think it's actually very appropriate
12 that we're meeting here at the University of Bridgeport
13 tonight. This past fall, I was involved in a State
14 business plan competition that encourages college students,
15 graduates and undergraduates across the State of
16 Connecticut to develop a business plan, which then was
17 assessed by investors, entrepreneurs, business start-ups,
18 and I'm pleased to say that the undergraduate winner and
19 the graduate that won were both students enrolled at the
20 University of Bridgeport.

21 Both of these students -- both of these plans involved
22 commercialized new technology; they were assessed to be the
23 best in class by State-wide investors, and our hope is that
24 these students will follow their dreams, start a company,
25 mature from being a young start-up to being the next

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1 Microsoft or Google. But the question that you might ask,
2 in developing a plan to create your vision for the future,
3 is how can we bring entrepreneurs to be nurtured, fostered
4 and encouraged to follow their dreams. Thank you.

5 MR. MCMILLEN: Thank you, very much. Is
6 there anyone else that would like to speak tonight?
7 Commissioner?

8 COMMISSIONER MCDONALD: I'm going to stand,
9 because I've been sitting all day, and sitting at this
10 table. And, first of all, I appreciate everybody that
11 walked down this steep grade to get down to the stage and
12 the podium, so thank you for that. I really want to
13 personally thank all of you for coming out tonight, and
14 the folks who were here before you, who had to leave.

15 This is really a critical component of our developing
16 the plan. As Stan mentioned, I, unfortunately, had to take
17 a call outside of the auditorium when we kicked tonight's
18 forum off, but this is one of ten that we are hosting
19 around the State. I think we have three more -- we have
20 three more, Danbury, Stamford and Hartford, and it's been
21 exhilarating, it's been enlightening. It's been
22 validating, because all of those things have happened.

23 For any of you that know and, Stan, that was of the
24 slides that was up here -- the public act that requires us
25 to develop this strategic plan identifies, I think it's

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1 fourteen or fifteen individual areas that we need to look
2 at. And as many of you said here tonight, and many others
3 in other forums that we've had around the State, and Stan
4 reemphasized, what is key is that all of these issues be
5 integrated. It is not looking at health care in a vacuum.
6 It is not looking at manufacturing in a vacuum. It is not
7 looking at entrepreneurs in a vacuum, but seeing how they
8 are all interwoven together.

9 We have a tremendous task ahead of us and, as someone
10 said today, it's also a tremendous opportunity. One of the
11 things that I have told the DECD staff, and that I say to
12 groups when I'm out around the State, is what's vitally
13 important, both from my perspective and from Governor
14 Rell's perspective, is that this not be a plan that sits on
15 the shelf; that this be a plan that we can have specific
16 initiative, and that we can really see a path towards
17 implementation.

18 So I think that that is vitally important in the
19 validation part of this process, is that you have validated
20 a lot of these issues that we thought were important, but
21 that you helped us craft. And the other pieces, I just
22 want to say, is when it comes time to make some hard
23 decisions about putting these ideas, and innovations, and
24 proposals into place, that there will be broad public

25 support. And that is the trick in anything when you try to
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1 implement good public policy.

2 I've been doing this for about twenty-five years, and
3 I have found that if you try to dictate something it is
4 doomed to fail, but if you open the process and start a
5 collaborative process and start a good dialogue, we might
6 not get everything that we want, but I think we will, at
7 least, be on the path to put those proposals in place.

8 You've all raised some critical issues here tonight,
9 and I truly, personally appreciate you all coming out. And
10 we really thank our partners at the University and
11 Community College system, which is where we're holding
12 these forums. And I think that exemplifies our commitment
13 to partnership. We will be coming back. This is the first
14 part of the process is to hear from you, and then as we
15 start to develop the specific initiative, we'll come back,
16 we'll have focus groups and we'll get feedback as we get
17 into the real nitty gritty of all of these proposals.

18 We'll probably be calling on some of you as we need
19 your individual expertise to help guide the specifics of
20 these proposals. So, again, thank you, very much. And we
21 appreciate our host, the City of Bridgeport, and our
22 friends in the University system. Thank you again.

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(Forum concluded at 7:16 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

STATE OF CONNECTICUT:
COUNTY OF HARTFORD:

I, SAMANTHA M. HOWELL, a Notary Public duly
commissioned and qualified in and for the State of
Connecticut, do hereby certify that the foregoing 79 pages
are a complete and accurate computer-aided transcription of
my Stenotype notes taken on January 10, 2008.

I further certify that I am a Notary Public duly
commissioned and qualified to administer oaths in the State
of Connecticut.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand
this 23rd day of January, 2008.

Samantha M. Howell
Notary Public

My Commission expires:
September 31, 2011