

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE COMMERCE COMMITTEE
February 21, 2012

Catherine Smith, Commissioner
Department of Economic and Community Development

Senate Bill No. 22

AN ACT CONCERNING THE CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Good Morning Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger, Senator Frantz, Representative Camillo and other members of the Commerce Committee. My name is Catherine Smith and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Governor's recommendations outlined in ***Senate Bill No. 22 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY***.

As you are aware, DECD's mission is to develop and implement strategies to increase the state's economic competitiveness. We do this by attracting and retaining businesses and jobs, revitalizing neighborhoods and communities, ensuring quality housing, and preserving and promoting cultural and tourism assets.

It is with these goals in mind that DECD enthusiastically supports Governor Malloy's Senate Bill 22, which will create the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) to strengthen redevelopment efforts in Hartford and East Hartford.

The bill before you today will be a critical component in making the capital region more competitive by establishing an organizational backbone needed to better manage the state's interest in the many assets, activities and investments in the area. This improved coordination will lead to a thriving capital city with stronger long-term economic prospects.

Specifically, Governor Malloy's proposal will:

- Establish a 13-member governing board consisting of four members appointed by the Governor, including the board's chairman and two appointed by the General Assembly. The mayors of Hartford and East Hartford, the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, and the commissioners of Transportation and Economic and Community Development will serve as nonvoting ex-officio members of the board.

- Provide better coordination that allows contiguous towns in the region, with approval of their legislative body, to work with CRDA on projects for economic development and tourism.
- Allow CRDA to provide marketing and sales coordination of Rentschler Field, the Connecticut Convention Center and the XL Center
- Provide a single, strategic voice for the state's interest in other economic development activities in the capital region related to housing, retail and other initiatives such as iQuilt.

Placing the management of these assets under CRDA will bolster efforts to stimulate new investment in these communities and the region. This bill represents the type of strategic approach and focus that is needed to accelerate economic revitalization efforts in our capital city.

I respectfully request the Committee's support for this proposal.