



STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF
Senate Bill 22: *An Act Concerning the Capital Region Development Authority*
Commerce Committee
February 21st, 2011

The MetroHartford Alliance is the Region's economic development leader and the City's Chamber of Commerce. Our investors include businesses of all sizes, health care providers, institutions of higher education, and municipalities. All of these investors share a common interest in the full economic and employment recovery of Connecticut, in a dynamic Capital City, and in the enhanced ability for the Region to compete for jobs, capital, and talent.

During this session, we urge the Legislature to continue to make Connecticut's economic and employment recovery and its infrastructure for sustained growth your top priority. The unquestioned foundation for that recovery and growth remains fiscal discipline. Given Connecticut's national ranking of fourth highest debt per capita, its growth in spending over the past decade, and the tax increases in its current biennial budget, it is absolutely imperative that we demonstrate that discipline by adhering to the Constitutional spending cap.

That foundation of fiscal discipline must be augmented by leveraging the past investment of taxpayer dollars in critical infrastructure. Senate Bill 22, which proposes to create the Capital Region Development Authority (the "Authority"), achieves the latter by expanding the role and geographic scope of the current Capital City Economic Development Authority ("CCEDA"), which was created in 1998 to manage the extraordinary State investment in new facilities that in turn attracted an equal investment of private capital. These facilities include: Capital Community College, the Connecticut

Convention Center, the Connecticut Science Center, Front Street, Hartford 21, the Morgan Street Garage, Rentschler Field, Temple Street, and Trumbull on the Park.

That combined private and public investment of well over one billion dollars and CCEDA's successful management of the facilities dramatically strengthened the economic landscape of the City and Region and produced an arsenal of assets that must now be leveraged for even more significant gains in employment, entertainment, entrepreneurship, housing, and the marketing of the Capital Region as a premier place to grow, launch, and relocate a business or venture. More recent developments clearly illustrate the opportunity for even greater gains: the excitement surrounding the iQuilt initiative; the purchases of Connecticut Riverview Plaza and the former WFSB site by private developers; the ongoing investments in their campuses by Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Hartford Hospital, and St. Francis Hospital; and the continued commitment to the City by our major corporate employers such as Aetna, Bank of America, Phoenix, Prudential, The Hartford, Travelers, UnitedHealthcare, and UTC.

The Alliance salutes CCEDA's invaluable achievements since 1998 and appreciates the dedication and talents of all who have served on the Board and in management and all who worked on designing, funding, and constructing the aforementioned facilities. While we are confident that this impressive portfolio of City and Regional assets bodes well for the future, we also recognize that the uncertainty of certain major facilities, such as the XL Center, the compact nature of the City, the high percentage of its tax-exempt property, and the challenges posed by its public education and public safety reputations require a renewed focus on the implications of those issues on the City's and Region's potential for growth along with a more comprehensive regional approach to addressing the issues and exploiting the potential. Accordingly, the Alliance supports a revised governing body along the lines contemplated by Senate Bill 22.

In supporting Senate Bill 22, we acknowledge the value of including elected officials and members of the Executive Branch as nonvoting members. More importantly, we also

urge the Governor, the Mayor of Hartford, and Legislative leaders to build on the success of CCEDA by ensuring that appointees to the Authority have significant private sector experience. It is critical that these individuals reflect the perspectives of our largest employers, of successful real estate developers, and of capital investors so that we realize the public-private partnerships that are the sine qua non to dynamic urban regions.

We would be pleased to answer any questions regarding our support and look forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature to establish an effective Authority to drive economic and employment growth in the City and the Region.

