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Testimony on SB-542 – AN ACT CONCERNING A LIAISON FOR MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES, WOMEN'S BUSINESS ENTERPRISES AND DIVERSITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

Honorable elected officials, thank you for the opportunity to address you with regards to this bill addressing the need to support Minority, Women and Diversity owned businesses in CT. My business is a DAS-Certified Minority/Small Business Enterprise here in CT.

I am in support of this bill, and believe it could also be incorporated with HB-5118 and HB-5979. I can speak from personal experience in the lack of knowledge about the opportunities for small/micro businesses to participate in State contracts. Only by becoming involved politically did I learn about the opportunities for assistance available from the State and State Agencies. I regularly meet other business owners that are not aware of the many state programs available to them, and I direct them to contact DAS in order for them to become Certified businesses and learn more about the available State programs that can assist them in building their businesses.

I think it is important that the State provide a Liaison as the process for becoming Certified and working with State Agencies can be a complicated process. The issue is that it is easy to become frustrated with the process and just give up on trying to get Certified or bid on State contracts. If the State provided a Liaison, a business owner would have a point person to reach out to and ask for help. In the past, I have personally reached out to some of my local state representatives to help me through the process, as my application had been listed as pending for an extended period of time. It would have been better for me to have a Liaison to assist me with what was basically a process issue. The Liaison would also be able to assist and educate business owners on registering with DAS; connect them to other State Agency resources, educate them on how to bid on and win State contract work, and direct them to other State programs that exist today. For example, my business is also registered with the STEP-UP program, and is hiring an employee through the Workplace – Platform-to-Employment program.

Thank you for your time. I am open to answering any questions you may have for me.

Sincerely,

Antonio Paulo Pinto