



Department of Economic and
Community Development

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Catherine H. Smith
Commissioner

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMERCE COMMITTEE
3/1/16

RE: SB 307: AN ACT CONCERNING KNOWLEDGE ENTERPRISE ZONES

**HB 5426: AN ACT MANDATING THE CREATION OF THE CONNECTICUT-MADE
DESIGNATION**

Senator Hartley, Representative Perone, Senator Frantz, Representative Camillo and members of the Commerce Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify to testify on two bills before you here today: SB 307 and HB 5426.

As you are aware, our mission at the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is to develop and implement strategies to increase the state's economic competitiveness. We do this by attracting and retaining businesses and jobs, revitalizing neighborhoods and communities, and preserving and promoting cultural and tourism assets.

Senate Bill 307 proposes to establish new knowledge center enterprise zones surrounding any college, university or other institution of higher learning in the state. Though the language in the bill is permissive and does not require DECD to establish any zones, we would like to note our general opposition to such measures. Any new addition to our existing enterprise zone programs runs the risk of diluting the overall impact of these offerings. Moreover, we are confident that we currently have programs to serve effectively businesses in or locating to the areas addressed in this particular bill.

House Bill 5426 mandates that DECD establish and administer a program to promote the marketing of products produced in Connecticut. The proposed language strips the phrase "within available appropriations," as though by doing so, the agency would somehow have the resources available to implement all the promotional and marketing activities outlined in the statute.

Though the goals of a Connecticut Made program are laudable, DECD, like all state agencies, is facing severe budgetary constraints. We simply do not have the personnel and resources necessary to carry out such a program. More importantly, we are already undertaking various efforts to promote products produced in Connecticut.

For instance, we recently ran a very successful Connecticut Made Gift Giving marketing effort this past fall. Integrated marketing elements associated with that campaign included the development of specialized content, features on CTvisit.com, news stories,



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social media support, and paid media efforts. Further, we continue to promote Connecticut products throughout the year including popular agriculture and culinary offerings such as maple syrup, chocolate, wine, and ice cream. We also support art, crafts, furnishings made in Connecticut by promoting hundreds of special events each year. And, of course, Connecticut products are proudly emphasized at the Big E, one of the largest fairs in the United States.

Thanks for allowing me to share some thoughts on these proposals. I appreciate, in advance, your due consideration of our concerns.