Testimony of Michelle Seagull
Commissioner of Consumer Protection

Appropriations Committee
February 26, 2019

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Lavielle and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee, good morning, I am Michelle Seagull, Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP). Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Governor Lamont’s proposed budget for our agency for the upcoming biennium.

Since fiscal year 2012, DCP has taken on new or expanded responsibilities including the medical marijuana program, the board of accountancy, oversight of the cottage food industry, and expansion of the prescription monitoring program including mandatory look-up and other initiatives to combat the opioid epidemic.

We are pleased that Governor Lamont’s proposed budget for the next biennium would increase DCP’s overall budget by 6.5 percent in FY 20 and an additional 5.2 percent in FY 21, allowing DCP to hire three additional staff to address the huge increase in applications for the medical marijuana program, the growing challenges in the homemaker companion industry, and the implementation of cottage foods credentialing.
The Department will continue to work to provide essential, core services in the most efficient, cost-effective way by focusing our resources on work that protects public health and safety and prevents significant economic harm to consumers and businesses. Through improved education, compliance and enforcement as well as improved processes, we will continue to:

- Enhance our e-licensing system and increase the use of the system by licensees. *DCP now has almost 300 license types available online and the online renewal rate has increased from 34% in 2010 to 62% in 2018.*

- Find ways to eliminate wasteful work and replace inefficient practices with streamlined processes. *The growth in online renewals, for example, is attributable, in part, to the launch of a Fast Track renewal process in July 2017. This process allows credential holders to renew their license using a unique PIN that is sent with the renewal notice even if the credential holder has forgotten their User ID or password. As another example, DCP’s Drug Control division used grant funds to purchase iPads for its Drug Control agents; this has helped reduce the amount of time from initial application to approval for facilities requiring an inspection from 233 days in 2014 to 51 days in 2017.*

- Spend time working with, and educating, business groups and consumers. *Ensuring that everyone knows the rules, and has the tools to protect themselves from fraudulent activity, creating a more fair, and transparent market place while reducing the time spent investigating complaints. We are accomplishing this not only through traditional channels, but though increased efforts to speak to communities that have not been reached sufficiently due to language and cultural barriers and low literacy.*

We look forward to continuing our work with the Governor, our sister agencies and all of you here in the Legislative Branch to achieve these goals.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I am proud of the hard work of DCP’s employees and happy to answer any questions you may have.