Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and members of the committee. My name is David Lehman, and I am commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you to discuss Governor Lamont’s proposed biennial budget for economic and community development.

As you know, our mission at 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 the arts and cultural and tourism assets.

The next two budget years will be challenging. Some difficult choices will need to be made to get the state on firmer financial footing going forward. It is clear, the state’s long-term fiscal health and the private sector’s confidence therein are foundational to the work that we do support the growth of businesses in Connecticut. In addition to the fiscal stability represented throughout Governor Lamont’s proposed budget for FY2020-FY2021, funding for our department’s operations and those with whom we engage in fundamental partnerships indicates that economic development remains a top priority of this administration. We are confident that the agency’s operating budget will provide us with sufficient resources to carry out our mission and to make important investments in preserving and promoting Connecticut’s assets that determine companies’ and individuals’ decision to live, work, and play in our state.

Our renewed partnership with the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) revitalized by that organization’s new board chairs, Jim Smith and Indra Nooyi, will demonstrate how public-private partnerships can better engage our business leaders to bring their expertise and resources to the effort to achieve our common goal.
Our operating budget allows DECD to be the primary point of contact between our state government and businesses large and small looking to grow in or relocate to Connecticut. It will allow us to continue to be proactive in partnering with municipalities to assess, compile, and amplify our assets to those looking to live in or visit our state. Finally, our budget will allow us to continue to manage our existing commitments across programs.

As a result, I respectfully request the committee’s support for the Governor’s proposals. I also look forward to working with you to implement the agency’s budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.