



David A. Lehman
Commissioner

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMERCE COMMITTEE
3/12/18

Re: H.B. 5007 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDENT LOAN REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM FOR CERTAIN PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN HIGH-DEMAND FIELDS

H.B. 7008 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP ON A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP TO RECRUIT BUSINESSES TO CONNECTICUT.

H.B. 7308 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS STEERING COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE STATE'S ELECTRONIC BUSINESS PORTAL.

S.B. 1024 AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY CONCERNING TOURISM.

S.B. 1025 AN ACT CONCERNING AN EVALUATION OF DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TAX INCENTIVES.

S.B. 1026 AN ACT ESTABLISHING CERTAIN INCENTIVES TO GROW THE BIOSCIENCE INDUSTRY IN THE STATE.

S.B. 1027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT ECONOMIC RESOURCE CENTER.

Senator Hartley, Senator Martin, Representative Simmons, Representative Cummings and members of the Commerce Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding our thoughts with several bills on today's agenda.

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.

HB 5007 would require DECD to study the feasibility of establishing a student loan reimbursement program through public-private partnerships. SB 1026 would encourage the bioscience industry to grow in the state through incentives. While we appreciate the intent of these bills, we are concerned with some of the specifics in each respective bill. We would like the opportunity to sit down with the committee to gain a better understanding of how they decided on the specific proposals and offer input, if possible.



HB 7308 would implement the recommendations of the telecommunications systems steering committee concerning the state's electronic business portal. We agree with this bill and its intent, however, we believe this should be done through the Department of Administrative Services as we do not administer any of the programs identified in the bill. Additionally, HB 7008 would implement the recommendations of the working group on public-private partnerships, while we are generally supportive of this bill, we believe it is too specific in nature and could end up forcing the department to undertake time-intensive initiatives that have little return. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Commerce Committee on the specifics of this bill.

Though some of them are certainly "placeholder" bills, many of the pieces of legislation before you today are bills that would require DECD to study one issue or another. For instance, HB 1024 would require DECD to study tourism and its effects and impact on the state and its economy. However, our Office of Tourism recently commissioned an Economic Impact study of Tourism in Connecticut with Tourism Economics. The results are due back May 2019. SB 1027 would require DECD to issue a report regarding the progress of entering into a public-private partnership with CERC, while we understand the intent of the bill we believe this report is unnecessary. SB 1025 would require DECD to study the department's tax incentives programs. Considering we report on our tax incentive programs in our annual report every year, we believe this report would be duplicative in nature.

While we understand that the content of many of these bills may change as they make their way through the legislative process, we are compelled to share our perspectives on them as currently drafted. With the agency's staffing levels down approximately 20%, we truly do not have the resources to undertake all these studies, and we prefer to collaborate with the legislature in advance to make sure we are collectively utilizing our resources efficiently.

Thanks in advance for your consideration of our thoughts on these bills.