

Testimony of
Michelle Noehren
Before the Commerce Committee
February 16, 2020

Senator Hartley, Representative Simmons, and members of the Commerce Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of H.B. 5481, AA Establishing a Grant Program for Women and Minority-Owned Businesses.

This bill would require the Department of Economic and Community Development to establish a grant program for women and minority-owned businesses to help these businesses that have been disproportionately hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In my town of Colchester, we have over 30 woman-owned businesses. These businesses are essential to our town's character and community. Several line our quaint Main Street including a beloved ice cream shop, a popular artisan's boutique, a new consignment store, and more. Our woman-owned businesses need support, and access to more capital through this grant program would provide significant financial relief.

Many of our business owners have had to create innovative ways to stay open. Our restaurants began offering more curbside pickup and takeout options, but these businesses are struggling even more now because of the cold winter weather and inability to offer outdoor dining. One of our most popular restaurants is a woman-owned business and she is doing the best she can to retain her employees and keep her location open.

I applaud the committee's efforts to support our woman-owned businesses. They are vital to the health of the Connecticut economy and the health of our local communities.