

CHAIRPERSONS: Senator Bob Duff,  
Representative Julio Concepcion

SENATORS: Formica, Hartley, Kelly

REPRESENTATIVES: Godfrey, Kennedy, Quinn,  
Vargas, Yaccarino

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Good Afternoon, everyone. I will officially call to order the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee Public Hearing for Thursday, March 25, 2021. We have four nominees on the agenda today but before we get started, are there any comments? I see that my Co-Chairman has his camera off so he must be off. Any comments from my Vice-Chair Representative Quinn?

REP. QUINN (82ND): No, I'm just happy to be here, good to see everyone.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): And the Ranking Member Representative Kennedy, any comments?

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman ready to go and welcome our guests today and let's get it done.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, Representative. The first item on the agenda is a House Resolution confirming Burke Jay Hunter to the Board of Directors of the Materials, Innovation and Recycling Authority also known as MIRA here in the state. Mr. Hunter is he on?

BERT HUNTER: I am here.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): How are you, sir?

BERT HUNTER: Good Morning.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Good Morning, thanks for joining us. Before we get started if I can have you raise your right hand please. Do you promise, swear and affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

BERT HUNTER: I do.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much. The floor is yours for any opening comments.

BERT HUNTER: Okay, thank you. It's good to be with you, Chair Concepcion and the other Members of the Committee. Thank you for having me here today. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be nominated by Governor Lamont to the Board of Directors of the Materials, Innovation and Recycling Authority or MIRA. I thank him for this nomination. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to be before you today to tell you about myself, share my qualifications for this nomination and to convey my desire to serve on MIRA's Board.

For the record I've been a resident of Connecticut since 1999 and my wife and I live in Greenwich. We are empty nesters and we are fully vaccinated. Thank you, Connecticut. I currently service the state as Chief Investment Officer for the State's Green Bank. In this role I am accountable for securing private capital, clean energy investments in the state, alongside capital from the Green Bank in order to help Connecticut achieve its clean energy targets in the fight against the impacts of climate change. This results in a cleaner environment, much needed investment for our state and thousands of good paying jobs.

As for my nomination by Statue MIRA's Board of Directors consists of 11 directors. Three of these directors are appointed by the Governor, one of whom has had extensive high level experience in the

energy field. It is in this capacity that the Governor submitted my nomination.

As you can see from my CA which has been made available as part of this testimony, my experience in energy stretches across five decades. From the late 70s as an MBA intern with the Utilities Lending Team of a major New York bank, in the 80s - 90s and early 2000s with independent electric power projects and the most recent decade in renewable energies such as solar PV including solar for state municipal buildings, for our state colleges and town schools, multifamily housing and businesses as well as onshore winds, small hydroelectric power and anerobic digesters which process organic waste into electricity or biofuels.

In the 80s after a career in commercial lending and equipment leasing with a New York bank and subsequently becoming a treasurer of its International Leasing Division, a group of executives, including me, teamed up with what it now the Japanese financial giant, MUFG and Mitsubishi Corporation to establish a joint venture to provide innovative financing for an array of better prices.

In the end we focused our attention on commercial aircraft demands for major airlines in US and abroad and in an energy practice in the US which I lead. Going back to independent power I mentioned, the focus of our company was on combined heat and power projects for CHP. These projects improved the overall efficiency of the use of fuel being consumed by using the waste heat that results from electric power generation for useful purpose.

Using waste heat for useful purpose is one of the things MIRA does. MIRA burns municipal solid waste collected from its member towns and the heat from the combustion of this waste produces steam which powers several turbine generators to make electricity. It's one of five waste energy

facilities in the state. The four other facilities are owned and operated by the private sector. In addition, MIRA runs a recycling operation to handle single stream recycling.

In my 30 years' experience with CHP, I was accountable for oversight of the operator of these facilities as well as managing risk in the energy markets. I acquired a deep understanding for the operation of energy markets as well as requirements for monitoring and managing impacts on their quality, other discharges from these facilities, the operation and maintenance of power turbine generators, heat recovery steam generators, boilers, chillers, dealing with catastrophic equipment failures as well as workers safety matters.

Eventually I became involved with commercial scale Solar PV projects which are generally one to 20 megawatts capacity. That experience and the desire to scale that business more broadly led me to the opportunity as Chief Investment Officer for the Connecticut Green Bank in 2012, a position that I hold today. But I am quick to point out I am no engineer.

My approach to these facilities was and is today from a financial perspective but always with a need to have a deep understanding of the operational needs of the massive and complex equipment that each of these undertakings entails as well as the energy markets and regulatory framework that impacts the business models of these businesses and determine if these endeavors can be sustainable for financial success. It is in this context and professional experience that I possess that the Governor has requested by service on MIRAs Board as one of his appointees.

There is a request that if confirmed I am wholeheartedly prepared to accept for a few reasons. First, Connecticut pretty much like every other

state in the nation has a waste problem. According to our Department of Energy and Environmental Protections, DEEP, Connecticut's waste sector is at a critical point. In 2016 we exported approximately 100,000 tons per year of municipal solid waste to other states.

By 2018 that tonnage being exported to other states quadrupled, so approximately 400,000 tons. Bear in mind we in Connecticut generate about a 2.4 million tons of nonrecyclable waste each and every year that must be processed. So that is one-sixth of our waste being exported today. Instate waste energy facilities are aging. MIRA is the oldest such facility in Connecticut being in service for 34 years. The four other facilities range in age from 26 to 33 years of service. The varying degrees these facilities were increasing require costly upgrades and/or more expensive maintenance.

Revenue from electricity sales are declining for all of these facilities as wholesale power prices have fallen over the years. These events are putting upward pressure on tip fees, the fees charged for waste disposal particularly at the MIRA facility and are upsetting a long established business model that worked quite well for many years. New business models must be developed and encourage to lower the level of waste Connecticut exports to other states and to contain the expense our cities and towns must bear to dispose of this waste.

My experience in energy broadly and in capital raising more specifically particularly in a quasigovernmental authority context like the Green Bank could be of value as MIRA's Executive Leadership and Board chart a course forward in this challenging contest.

Second given the closure of the Wallingford facility years ago, and with MIRA taking steps to shut down its waste energy operations, Connecticut risks

becoming increasingly reliant of out-of-state landfills to manage our municipal solid waste. Having done so well over many years to become relatively waste independent, it is essential for Connecticut to redouble its efforts to maintain this waste independence and avoid reliance on other states to accept our waste.

DEEP is actively working with dozens of towns across the state to explore, understand and implement waste models that have been successful in other states. Programs that would divert hundreds of thousands of tons of waste that otherwise would end up in out-of-state landfills. One of these approaches would divert organics which comprise about one-third of our total waste stream to composters or anerobic digesters. Anerobic digesters can turn organic waste into electricity or biofuels, waste that would otherwise need to be burned or be shipped to landfills.

The Green Bank has financed two anerobic digesters in the state, one commercial project in Southington and one a dairy farm in Thompson. Again my skills and experience would be helpful in developing and accessing alternative paths to sustain a waste independent future for Connecticut.

Third is part of our efforts to make it easier for Connecticut citizens to invest in a greener, cleaner economy. The Green Bank surveyed Connecticut residents and determined that the number one investment they would like to make in a green Connecticut economy is in waste and recycling. In case you're wondering, Solar PV was number two.

I believe the Connecticut citizens would be willing to invest in municipal bonds that could help develop the infrastructure that would be part of a sustainable waste management program and at today's historically low interest rates that could be very attractive.

Again, my experience here could be used for exploring these essential paths forward and the funding implications of such plants. So thank you again for the opportunity to present my experience and capabilities which if confirmed I would be pleased to make available in service to the state as a member of the Board of MIRA. I'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time. Back to you, Mr. Chair.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Hunter. Congratulations on your nomination and I find it somewhat serendipitous that my first time I chair, officially chair, I have two MIRA Board Members on the agenda as the MIRA facilities have been in my district. So glad you're here. Thank you for actually accepting the nomination from the Governor. Just to be clear, is this a reappointment or is this a new appointment?

BERT HUNTER: This is a new appointment.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Okay so you haven't sat on the Board at all?

BERT HUNTER: I have sat on the Board since the December meeting.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Oh, okay so I mean, you're.

BERT HUNTER: In anticipation of confirmation.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Understood. So, you know, just a couple of questions before I turn it over to my colleagues, but certainly your background and experience would be honestly of value to the Board in your responsibility with the Green Bank. In your testimony you mentioned the issues of again facilities and need for new business models. Can you expand a little bit on that? In your experience what type of new technology should Connecticut be

investing in as you mentioned it a couple of times in your testimony?

BERT HUNTER: Right, the most important thing, I think is to reduce waste at the beginning. So because if you reduce that waste you don't have to deal with it any other way. So there are models that are being explored that actually encourage citizens all over the state and businesses all over the state to reduce the amount of waste they are actually generating. And then, that can be done by actually, you know, being a little bit more thoughtful about the waste that we potentially can generate.

The other thing we can do is we can recycle more. We can get that recycling amount up higher. The third area is in the area of organic waste. As I mentioned about a third of the waste that is generated other than recycling is related to organic waste. So if we can, that sets about 800,000 tons per year. If we get a sizable portion of that organics dealt with, we can make energy out of that, we can make biofuels out of that, we can fuel, you know, busses our municipal busses, school busses, things of that sort. Or we can just put it into the pipeline.

I believe there is a Bill that is before the legislature right now that is sponsored by DEEP that would give DEEP authority to enter into contracts or to promote those types of contracts to promote the productions of biofuels from our organic waste. So those are just a few examples of how we can do a better job with waste management.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thanks for that. Also in your testimony you mentioned that MIRA is taking steps and shutting down the waste energy operations at the facility and I don't think there is anybody happier of that than I am and I believe the date right now is July of 2022 where the facility ceases operation on that.



I do have a concern in the lack of urgency that I've seen throughout, you know, I think it is 51 member towns that use that particular facility. Is the Board discussing a communications strategy to these other municipalities that are chipping in their waste to that facility or is that something that DEEP is also heavily involved in?

BERT HUNTER: Both actually. Two weeks ago there was a meeting held with the member towns and there was an extensive discussion at that time about the changes that will be coming and Commissioner Dykes was part of that conversation as well as the entire MIRA Board. So these conversations will be ongoing to anticipate the other changes that will be coming in the months ahead, approximately a year from now.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Great. Two more questions and I know you're very new to the Board just being essentially four months in. Do you know once the facility is essentially, you know, ceases to operate are there plans for remediation of that particular land and facility, is that a responsibility of MIRA?

BERT HUNTER: They're - my understanding is that it is MIRAs responsibility. There will be a study that will be undertaken in respect of what is required as far as decommissioning of the facility in time. So that study I believe is supposed to take place over the next two years.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): And then just my last question, it's probably unfair again since you're new nomination but I believe it was in 2019 or 2020 where the facility experienced the major malfunction, I think it was a turbine that ceased to operate and we have to take our waste, I believe, out of state. Has a Board discussed any, you know, what ifs? What if it happens again in the near future and are there things that or ideas to remedy that situation?

BERT HUNTER: So it's an old facility. But currently it's being maintained. It has been maintained properly. My understanding is the failure that happened was as a result of operator error and I think that there was a coincident occurrence, the failure of the other, of the other engine. I think there are three and I think one was offline for maintenance, you know, one had a problem and the other one miraculously went offline at the same, at approximately the same time so the entire facility was shutdown which lead to the need to transport waste out of the state on a temporary basis.

So NAES is the operator of the facility, has been for years, they are well aware of what is needed to keep the facility up and operate, in an operating condition. As I mentioned in my general remarks, you know, these facilities have a lot of equipment that is moving quite rapidly and in an interdependent sort of way but that's the responsibility of the operator to be on top of all of that and to bring to the attention of executive management, the staff of MIRA those things that need to be repaired, replaced in order to keep the facility operating properly and as far as I am aware that is being done.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you for that. And again congratulations on your nomination. I am really excited to have someone like you that's with your experience with the Green Bank and your forward thinking attitude on that Board, it's much needed. So congratulations again. I will. That will end my questions and I will turn it over to the Chairman Duff. Do you have any questions?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. Good to see you. It's been a while. We go back a ways from my days as Chair and Vice-Chair of Energy and Technology Committee and unfortunately I won't get into geek mode here and start going back and forth on energy

policy because this is also interesting to me and yet complicated at the same time.

I am very excited about your appointment to MIRA because I think that you bring a wealth of experience and knowledge and your testimony reflected your passion, and ideas and ability to try and bring solutions to something that has really dogged the state for a long time and, you know, there are no simple solutions to this very complex problem and as you talked about, you know, that we now are shipping more waste out of state than we have done in a long time, it's always been kind of a pride of ours in think, in Connecticut that we were able to, you know, whether we have hopefully less garbage but the garbage we had we're able to burn in a mostly environmentally friendly way, turn into electricity, sell it out to the market but not ship out trucks around the country with our, you know, Connecticut's garbage on it increasing pollution.

So, anyway, I think that it going to take some real, some people really coming together thinking hard about what we can do on such a complex issue. And obviously it's almost like electricity, the best electricity and the cheapest electricity is the electricity we don't use and the same thing will be for our waste is the cheapest waste is the waste we don't put into the stream.

I know when I was Chair of the Energy Committee the Environment Committee to a lead role in having our waste reduction goals and kind of a solid waste management plan going forward though again that is just a tricky thing to do because of not only trying to change people's habits but also at the same time dealing with infrastructure that is decades old, that has environmental justice issues. I mean you think about the plant in Hartford it's on, it's in a place that would be ripe for redevelopment, it would never be placed there today and we have the same

thing in so many of our other urban areas as well.  
So we got to get a handle on that also.

So I don't really have any questions because your testimony was so detained and it was, I thought it was and you're just new coming on to it, but I would just again say thank you for your willingness to serve on something that really impacts I think every citizen of the State of Connecticut whether they know it or not and that you're going to be helpful in finding solutions to something that has been so difficult in the past but I know that with your experience and with your ideas, if there is anybody who can help beat a path forward it will be you. So, Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you again, Bert for willing to serve.

BERT HUNTER: Thank you, Senator.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you, Chairman Duff.  
Any other questions? Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Hunter for being here and for the very detailed narrative that you gave us on your background, it's extensive and I look forward to your energy and excitement on coming onto this Board. I think you will bring so much to this Board. So one of the things I've had numerous discussions with my public works director is people just don't recycle properly. Its continually a problem.

Everybody throws everything in recycling and thinks that it all should be recycled and then it seems to be this contaminated items or it's the whole, I'm not sure how you say it, but it gets thrown out, you have problems with it. How, what? Is it? What would be most effective, is it more education, is it start all the way down with our children and like Senator Duff said, you know, we have to continue to educate but we have to get people to change their

habits? What do you see as something that we could do to help with that?

BERT HUNTER: Well.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): That would help our towns, especially our towns where there are tipping fees are being impacted?

BERT HUNTER: Well, you are so right. And I have a chart that is posted nearby in my house, by the bin, to remind me, refresh my memory on what goes where, what is recyclable, what's not. It's not something that is intuitive. You know, you would think that a piece of plastic might be, you know, just fine for recycling but come to find out if you check the list again, oh no you're not supposed to do that, that is supposed to be trash. So it can get confusing. There is need for education.

I think that is the best thing that the towns can do and to do it in a way that resonates with their citizens. But the other thing is that there are imperfect price signals, if you will, you know, for and there is an old adage you can't manage what you can't measure and I think you can't measure what you can't value. So, to the extent that people are doing things and are not realizing the, not only the environmental impact that's happening but also the financial impact that it's having on their town which then, you know, comes back to them eventually being citizens of the town.

If there were better, not only better education but better price signals then I think people would be more thoughtful about how much waste they generated and how they disposed of their waste. There are some price signals but how many times are you taking tires to the dump and being charged, you know, \$10.00 dollars a tire for getting rid of a tire or \$25.00 dollars for a mattress. That's a price signal. The signal that is used, you know, quite

rarely so it's not really motivating, you know, behavior in a regular sense. So I think that education and price signals are two things that will very much help us deal with our waste situation.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): I appreciate your thoughts on that, sir. Thank you very much and I actually have that same poster right next to my recycling [Laughs]. If you find an extra one I'll pass it along. So congratulations on your appointment Mr. Hunter and I know you will be a valuable asset to this Committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, Representative. Any other questions from the Committee? Seeing none, Mr. Hunter just one last question before you go, there is one question we ask of every nominee, is there anything in your past that you might believe might prove embarrassing to this Committee, to the Governor or the State of Connecticut?

BERT HUNTER: Not at all, sir.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Hunter. Good to see you and thanks again for agreeing to be on this Board.

BERT HUNTER: Thank you very much. Have a good day.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): You too. All right, next on the agenda we have House Joint Resolution confirming Gregory - Dr. Gregory Duncan Harris of Windsor to be a member of the New England Board of Higher Education. I saw Dr. Hunter on.

GREGORY DUNCAN HARRIS: Good Afternoon.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Good Afternoon, Dr. Harris, how are you?

GREGORY DUNCAN HARRIS: Great, great. Glad to be here.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Again before you start if you can please raise your right hand. Do you promise, swear and affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

GREGORY DUNCAN HARRIS: I do.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much and the floor is yours, sir.

G. DUNCAN HARRIS: Good Afternoon, I am Dr. G. Duncan Harris, the CEO of Capital Community College and I am honored to have been nominated to serve on the New England Board of Higher Education.

Last week, on March 16th, I actually celebrated by 25th year of service to our state's community college system. I worked for 22 years at Manchester Community College, starting in 1996 as a test administrator for the institution and capping my tenure at MCC as the College's Dean of Student Affairs. I was fortunate during this tenure to spend a year on special assignment launching our state's Community College Student Success Center a project originally funded by a grant from the Kresge Foundation that I helped author. For the past three years I've served as the CEO of Capital Community College in Hartford, Connecticut.

I am a product of our state's public schools having attended middle and high schools in Bloomfield, Connecticut. I attended the University of Connecticut for my undergraduate studies and I have a degree in economics and a graduate degree from Central Connecticut State University where I pursued a degree in Counseling and Student Development in Higher Education. My wife Garcia and I reside in Windsor, Connecticut where we've lived for the past 18 years raising our three children Joycelyn who is

26, Grant who is 16 and my youngest Grayson who is 13 years old.

Regarding my ability to serve in the role, I am very familiar with the higher education institutions in our state, public and private. I'm knowledgeable about the accreditation requirements prescribed by our accrediting body, the New England Commission on Higher Education, known as ENCHE, having worked on the self-studies and reviews of institutions where I've served and also having been a member of visiting accreditation teams by ENCHE.

I am very involved in the community and I currently serve on the boards of Capital Work Force Partners, the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System, the Urban League of Greater Hartford, Connecticut Food Bank Food Share and the Wadsworth Atheneum. I am already familiar with the work of NEBHE having represented our system a few years ago on the Tuition Break Program and then this past January I worked, was asked to present on regional forecast enrollment forecast trends for NEBHE as a part of a panel.

Based on my 25 years of experience in higher education, lived experience as a resident of our state, and awareness of the needs of the corporate and noncorporate profit organizations in our state I feel very capable of representing our state as a member of the New England Board of Higher Education. I am thankful for this opportunity and I am hopeful that the Members of the Committee would be willing to contact me should they identify an opportunity for me to more fully leverage my role on the Board for the benefit of our state and citizens. Thank you.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, Dr. Harris. Congratulations on your nomination and congratulations on your success at Capital. Capital is in my district and seeing the difference over the



last decade or so of that community college has been pretty inspiring so thank you for all your work on being the head of that community college. Just a couple of questions on my end. You know you have your foot in a couple of different camps here. What do you think are the greatest challenges facing higher education in New England specifically in our urban areas?

G. DUNCAN HARRIS: Yeah, I think, you know, front and center we closed our campus March 12th last year, you know, due to Covid and so certainly coming out of Covid there is a front and center need to get, you know, folks back to work. Many industries have been decimated as a result of Covid, travel and hospitality and things of that nature and so as a community college, you know, we have the benefit of standing up programs relatively quickly.

As a matter of fact, we Eversource reached out to us and will have our first cohort for line workers and so we have funding that, we have, they actually provided some funding. We were able to partner with them and get folks back to work in good jobs working for Eversource. We are in the midst of Hartford, as one of the few cities that currently doesn't offer onramp to manufacturing I'm pleased to share that we will be working this summer and we will have our first cohort of students that will be able to have that onramp to viable careers in manufacturing.

ElectroPart will occur at Capital's campus and we have a meeting on Monday at Prince Tech to see about utilizing their lab in a similar fashion to some of the other programs in this state which, you know, provide viable access. So there is piece of my calculus with that's required is Onramps to Employment, right.

I talk about the need for us to have access to a first job for many of our students. You know, that first job certainly they should be able to leverage

that to get a better job after they have taken courses or completed a certificate of one of our degrees. And then, you know, finally and equally important to have what those of us on this call have which is a career. Right? So we are very dialed in on and understanding our obligation to ensure that the pathway, you know, the middleclass, especially in a city like Hartford.

You know, depending on the index you're utilizing that might suggest it is the fourth poorest city in the Nation. You know, I have some of my students live in zip codes that have median household income of less than, but you're aware less than \$25,000 dollars. However I know if they complete my nursing degree or my cyber security degree or RAD tech or what have you, what that does for them and their families and future generations.

So we are dialed in, immediate front and center is, you know, opening campus back up, you know, being there for folks that are wondering what they are going to do next coming out of the pandemic and then having viable programmatic options for them to get them back in the world of work or retrain or what have you.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you for those comments, Dr. Harris. In your testimony you mentioned your familiarity with NEHBE particularly on the Tuition Break Program can you talk a little bit about what that program was?

G. DUNCAN HARRIS: Yeah, so the Tuition Break Program is a regional compact where if there are programs or degrees that we don't offer here in our state that students can go to another state and receive the same tuition amount that they would pay as native students from that state. It hasn't been marketed perhaps, as much as it should, and I think with the growing nature of online education and SNH and Phoenix and things like that, not everybody has

seen the utility in that. But that's, you know, basically the purpose of that Tuition Break Program.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): And I believe I'm remembering this correctly but Capital was instrument, I think it was called the Lead Center in your, at Capital where it was essentially the importance between a pipeline between students and employers, correct?

G. DUNCAN HARRIS: We have some model, national recognized models with the Hartford and Traveler, our Traveler's Edge Program which leverage, you know, kind of insurance and financial services industries where it is an apprentice model but designed specifically for IFS and our lead center where we have our noncredit programs, you know, or workforce programs, you know, houses, a lot of those entry programs that we have. But yes the Lead Center is one of our exemplars.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Yeah, so those are two pretty innovative programs that we created over at Capital. I guess my question is how are you going to bring that kind of innovative thinking to the Board that, you know, obviously as we move to a post-Covid world, you know, a lot of things will be changing so how do you bring that innovation style to the New England Board?

G. DUNCAN HARRIS: You know what's interesting and I have as my, as the previous nominee mentioned, I attended a couple of Board Member Meetings already and there is this idea of the exchange of Best Practice and High Impact Practices, you know, and so, you know, there is some sharing that Connecticut certainly can bring to the table based off of things that we've build and developed here with our New England fellow states and then there will be some things that certainly I'm excited about gleaning from, you know, evidence based practices, you know, from some of sister institutions within the other

New England states that we can stand up that would be of use to Connecticut.

And so, you know, as you mentioned, the Lead Center, there is some work I'd suggest that we're national thought leaders around apprentice work, things like that that we'll certainly share but at the same time I'd imagine neighbors to the north in Massachusetts might have some things that would make sense for us to stand up here. You know, as a matter of fact there is a program at Roxbury similar, a community college similar demographics as Capital that once again as a result of, you know, partnership with NEBHE that we might be able to, you know, share and leverage Best Practices from, you know, states to the north.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much and again congratulations on your nominations. Thank you for all the work you do, you know, in the state but particularly obviously, at least for me, in the City of Hartford. So, thanks a lot. Chairman Duff, any questions or comments?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Actually I'm good. Congratulations Dr. Duncan Harris, I appreciate your work and your willingness to serve. I think the questions that were asked and your testimony certainly gives me more than enough to be able to vote enthusiastically for your nomination. So, thank you, sir.

G. DUNCAN HARRIS: Thank you, Senator.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you, Chairman. Any other questions from the Committee? Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): I'll be very quick. Thank you, Dr. Brown or excuse me, Dr. Harris for being here and congratulations on your 25 years. You completely answered most of the questions already

for me. But I just want to take the opportunity to thank you and congratulate you again for accepting this position. This is a new appointment for you and I think you will do a fine job and it will be wonderful to have you on the Board. So thank you, sir and again congratulations on your 25 years. Appreciate your service.

G. DUNCAN HARRIS: Thank you, Representative.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, Representative. Seeing no other hands up or no questions, Dr. Harris again thank you very much. But before you go, it is customary for us to ask every nominee this question. Is there anything in your past that you believe might prove embarrassing to this Committee, to the Governor or to the State of Connecticut?

G. DUNCAN HARRIS: There is not.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much. Appreciate your time and go and enjoy this beautiful day.

G. DUNCAN HARRIS: Okay great. Thanks.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Take care. All right, our next item on the agenda is Senate Joint Resolution confirming Suzette Brown of Bloomfield to the Board of Directors of the Material Innovations and Recycling Authority.

SUZETTE BROWN: Hello.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Madam Mayor, how are you?

SUZETTE BROWN: I'm good thanks. How are you?

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Good, thank you very much. Actually I'm just looking for my notes here. If you could please, before we get started, raise your

right hand. The other hand - yeah. [Laughter]. Do you promise, swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

SUZETTE BROWN: I do.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much. Madam Mayor, the floor is yours.

SUZETTE BROWN: Good Afternoon, Representative Concepcion, Senator Duff, Senator Looney, Representative Quinn, Senator Kelly, Representative Kennedy and Distinguished Members of the Executive and Legislative Nomination Committee. My name is Suzette DeBeatham-Brown. And I am very honored to appear before you today as Governor Ned Lamont's nominee for the Material Innovation and Recycling Authority, otherwise known as MIRA.

I am a second term mayor in my fourth year, however, I do believe that I would bring to the Committee a local government perspective from a diverse community, sensitive to both the economic and environmental impact of solid waste disposal which is essential if a solution to our current problem is to be found. Bloomfield with its wide acceptance of the current municipal payment system for household collection and disposal system needs to be a part of the discussion on future alternatives to ensure equity in the cost, environmental impact and subsequent town support for our favored solution.

I am deeply honored to be considered for this position. I aim to carefully and intentionally carry out my duties on the Board, I am very open to your comments and input to making this appointment beneficial to this Board and to our community. I would like to thank you for your time and your attention. And while my background as you can see by my resume is not very extensive in this form of work, I do believe that I can bring a diverse perspective as well as some of the out-of-the-box

thinking that MIRA will need going forward. So I will be able to answer any questions that you might have.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, Mayor Brown, good to see you. And thank you for all the work, the public service you've done throughout your career in the great Town of Bloomfield. Just a quick question, I don't have too many. But obviously Bloomfield being one of the towns that uses the facility, how has your experience been working with the organizations as MIRA as an elected official? Has it been a positive experience?

SUZETTE BROWN: So we, you know, the experience is always good until you talk about money. {Laughs} So it's been a very positive experience. Our Town Manager Mr. Shank does most of our interaction. I've just now be interacting more intentionally because of the Board appointment. But I think MIRA has been open to hear the voice of the local municipality which is great.

Once again, I think the challenge becomes what MIRA has to do for the entire state and how the local municipality have to pay into that. What are their financial contributions to that? We, as a local municipality is looking at alternatives as well so being able to partner with MIRA will be beneficial to us. So I don't have any complaints, or I have not heard any complaint except on the financial side.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): That's great. And I am sure you're not the only one. I think we could all agree on the increase of tip fees and everything that has occurred by our local governments. You mentioned that thinking outside-the-box, you know, as a new Board member there, can you just expand on that just a little bit on what are some of your thoughts on expanding, you know, thinking kind of forward thinking when it comes to energy?

SUZETTE BROWN: So I do believe that one of the things that needs to be done is an educational campaign. Right? I believe that the municipality has information because they attend the Board meetings or they attend a meeting. But I'm talking about "Joe Public." Joe Public needs to understand how waste management impacts them besides a tipping fee that right now, the town takes care of. But we're looking at are we going to get recyclable bags, are we going to charge those recyclable bag to the resident.

If they know that you have two bags that two bags is free and now you're gonna have to spend "x" amount on getting other bags just to do your recycling. Is it more important for us to go compost route? Is it more important for us to be mindful of the waste that we generate and how that is going to impact us financially? So I believe a very, robust education would be wonderful for my municipality and if I think it is going to be beneficial for my municipality I think it would be beneficial throughout the state.

And some of those things I don't know if MIRA have thought about being able to put the monies towards that. I know that when you talk about compost not many people understand it and not many people see the value in it but I think that is an alternative as well but that goes back to educating people.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): I couldn't agree with you more. I think the educational piece is critical, you know, if the people really understood what it takes when it comes to waste energy and just the facility alone what it takes and, you know, the importance of recycling and everything else I think our constituents would be better off if they really understood the importance of recycling and, you know, organic waste and everything else.

But it is a difficult thing to know or to really grasp you head around. So that's all the questions I



had, Mayor Brown. Thank you very much for agreeing to be on this Board. I think your experience and knowledge will be beneficial, will be really beneficial and I hope you really do think outside-the-box. I think it is much needed on that Board. So again, appreciate you for agreeing to be on the Board. So, thank you very much.

SUZETTE BROWN: Thank you.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Chairman Duff?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mayor Brown for your willingness to serve I appreciate it. I did appreciate your testimony and also your comments to Representative Concepcion. I had to laugh out loud a little bit here by myself when you talked about its all well and good until you talk about the money. [Laughter] How true.

So I do think, you know, having Mayors or First Select People on the MIRA Board is important because you are the ones on the front lines really dealing with these kinds of issues and as I said to Bert, you know, we've done, we did policies on solid waste management plans, do policies on any number of things but its local officials who are really on the front line as to, you know, tipping fees and how this all works with, you know, homeowners and everything else.

I think we've got a lot of work to do on this issue and as I said to the previous nominee that there's just, we need creative solutions at this point on these issues. We can no longer afford to put these plans in our urban areas, our intercities where, you know, 50 years ago it was just kinda put there without objections. We've got to figure out how to use less waste and we've got to figure out how to recycle more and also ensure that we're not sending our garbage out of state.

So I don't think any of these solutions are easy. I think it does come down to money at some point, it comes down to changing behaviors and we're gonna have to have conversations with our constituents about how better to manage our own waste because, you know, today is garbage day for me, put the garbage in the garbage can and mysteriously it just goes somewhere. Nobody thinks about it and it's just the way it's been for a very long time. But I think we're right at the end of that road and we have to reckon with policies from the last 50-60 years that have basically been here today, gone tomorrow and try not gone tomorrow.

So I think your viewpoint, your willingness to serve and kind of a fresh set of eyes will be most welcome on that Board, so no questions, but just wanted to provide that comment to you.

SUZETTE BROWN: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): You're welcome.  
Congratulations again and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, Chairman Duff. Any other questions from the Committee? Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be remiss I just want to congratulate you, Mayor Brown on this appointment. I think you're going to bring thoughtful, very extensive experience to this Committee and I like your idea of talking about composting. I think that is a lot, we need to do a lot more with that and there is so many people that don't understand how much work goes into that. So I just want to say congratulations and thank you and I think you will do a wonderful job on this Committee. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SUZETTE BROWN: Thank you.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you, Representative. Seeing no other hands up, right now, Mayor Brown, thanks once again for joining us. Before you go, is there anything in your past that you believe might prove embarrassing to this Committee, to the Governor or to the State of Connecticut?

SUZETTE BROWN: No.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, Mayor. Good to see you and thanks again for your years of public service and your again willingness to serve on this important Board.

SUZETTE BROWN: Thank you very much.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Have a good day.

SUZETTE BROWN: You too.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Okay, so last but not least on the agenda we have Senate Joint Resolution confirming Ari Santiago of West Hartford to be a member of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. Is Ari in?

ARI SANTIAGO: Hello.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): How are you, sir?

ARI SANTIAGO: Good, thanks.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): If you can do me a favor and raise your right hand, do you promise, swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

ARI SANTIAGO: I do.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, sir.  
The floor is yours.

ARI SANTIAGO: All right. Good afternoon, Chairman Duff, Chairman Concepcion, Ranking Members Kelly and Kennedy, and Members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee. My name is Ari Santiago and it is my honor to be nominated as a Member of the Board of Regents for Higher Education by Governor Ned Lamont.

I am a resident of West Hartford and the founder and CEO and President of IT Direct, a Hartford based technology services firm which I established out of my apartment in Hartford in 2002 and am now post acquisition of IT Direct serving as the CEO of Compass MSP a national IT services firm who is headquarters are now here in West Hartford.

From the start working with computers was more than just a business. It became an outlet of sorts after a skiing accident left me paralyzed at the age of 13. It was then that a family friend brought me a computer, and with a lot of time on my hands, I really got into that machine. I planned on going into law like my father and started at Tuft's University, my passion for technology never left.

It ended up bringing me back to Hartford to eventually start IT Direct. Since then the company has continued to grow and receive numerous honors including INK Magazine's annual list of America's 5000 Fastest Growing Privately Held Companies In The U.S. Connecticut Technology Councils Technology Top 40, MSP top 501 Managed Service Providers worldwide as well as the Hartford Business Journal's Best Places to Work in Connecticut all of which for numerous years back-to-back for some time now.

All this has made me a relentless advocate for Connecticut and what a great place it is to build a

life and a business and a family. It is what drove me to start the podcast, Made in American with Ari Santiago which focuses on promoting the manufacturing industry, sharing Best Practices of industry leaders and spinning the positive news about manufacturing from policymakers.

It is what lead me to serve as a board and committee member for several local, national, international organizations such as the Entrepreneur's Organization, the Connecticut Technology Council, Senator Chris Murphy's Manufacturing and Aerospace and Connecticut Advisory Council, the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance, the Boys and Girls Club of Hartford, Access Hartford and Jewish Family Services but most of all most relevant to today it is what drives me to serve on the Board of Regents.

Seventeen colleges and universities governed by the BOR and one of the reasons why Connecticut is such a great place to live, learn and work. We provide affordable, accessible pathways to transformative higher education for all of Connecticut's residents across a range of our institutions and programs we strive to meet our student's where they are, help foster lifelong learners and engage citizens and ensure the state's employers have the innovative and exceptional workforce they need to meet their business goals.

As a Board Member I am dedicated to ensuring our institutions are not just preparing out students for the world ahead but that they are fostering the partnerships and innovative environments needed to help our students turn their dreams and passions into businesses that will stay and grow here as I have. I build a company where I get to help business harness the power of technology to achieve their goals and I want to help our colleges and universities build programs that help students harness the power of their entrepreneurship and innovation to achieve their goals. Thank you very

much. Happy to answer any questions you guys may have.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Santiago and congratulations on your nomination and congratulations on your success, certainly great to see kind of a homegrown individual like yourself succeeding in an amazing world. This is a reappointment, correct?

ARI SANTIAGO: I think this is my first confirmation. I was appointed several months ago, but my first confirmation.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Got you, thank you very much. In you, and I don't have any questions, a couple in your testimony there is a line here which I highlighted because you used two good words here, which is affordable and accessible when you're talking pathways to education, the higher education for all of our Connecticut residents. Can you expand a little bit on that on what the Board of Regents, what their responsibility is to be able to provide both affordable and accessible higher education for all residents of the state?

ARI SANTIAGO: Well thank you for the question, Representative Concepcion. I mean, I want to speak for myself and what I hope to achieve working with the Board as opposed to speaking for the entire Board. I don't think it is any secret to the people on the Committee that there has been an achievement gap, you know, between our, frankly our urban areas, our suburban areas and even our rural areas and our suburban areas and I think it is really important that we get focused on making sure that everybody in the state has access to higher education, a higher education thinking about my family that immigrated from Eastern Europe to the U.S. a couple of generations ago, you know, went from nothing to something largely on the back of a belief in higher education and that education was crucial to success.

And I think it is important on those of us that have climbed that ladder to look behind and help other people gain access to that education that was so crucial in our family and our successes. So I view my role on the Board of Regents to help kind of foster that view. I think it is a view the Board already has but to work hard and making sure that we're thinking about everybody in all the different communities of the state and making sure that they have access to the great colleges that we have and the community colleges, the state universities, online learning. There are so many options that we need to make sure they know about it, know how to get to it, know how to access it so there can be a lot more success stories like mine.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): That's great and it's a good segue for my next question which is, you know, along with some of the large university systems obviously the Board oversees, they also oversee our community colleges throughout the state and we have excellent community colleges. We just recently had Dr. Harris previous to you, the head of Capital Community College which is an amazing community college.

But sometimes I feel we don't do enough to promote them. You know, it's always the four year colleges, never the, or very rarely I should say the community colleges or the technical schools that could serve as a good pathway to some of our students, especially our urban, in our urban communities. Can you talk a little bit about, am I just making that up or is there like an actually gap that you see when it comes to at least communicating the option that the Board of Regents has to the students of our state?

ARI SANTIAGO: Well, listen, I don't think the Board of Regents is the only group in the State of Connecticut that could do a better job at communication. We have lots of great things going on

in the state that. What we're not as good at is letting people know all about them. So I think that in that context, you know, sure we could definitely do more marketing and outreach, more getting the word out. Right?

Being the best kept secret isn't that great when the goal is to have more people know about you. So finding ways to get out there and get the word be known is certainly something that I think is really important. And going back to your question about accessibility one of the key things is people knowing what is available to them and how to access it. So most certainly we have great community colleges. I was really happy recently to serve on the Selection Committee for the new CEO at Asnuntuck.

There is great things going on up there and we need to let people know about it. So absolutely we need to be out there shouting it from the mountain tops and I think, you know, the people on this Committee and everyone in the State of Connecticut could be helpful in that regard to let their constituents, their family, their friends and everybody know, hey we got great schools, check them out.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): That's great. Appreciate those comments. And that's all I had. Congratulations again on your nomination, you're going to do some great things I know it in the Board of Regents and with your fresh perspectives. So again, congratulations. Look forward to working with you in the next several years. Chairman Duff, any questions or comments?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah. Thank you very much, I appreciate it. So I want to first of all just say congratulations on your appointment and I want to say "amen" to talking about positive things that happen in Connecticut. I spend a lot of time doing that on various social media platforms because I



think that we beat ourselves up a lot on things that are wrong and never try to do anything in communicating the great things about Connecticut.

The funny thing is when people will come to this state from out-of-state, they are like oh my God, what a great place this is. You have excellent resources, you're so well positioned, your beautiful beaches or parks and everything else and I guess we've all been saying that, but we have to, we have to brag about that a little bit more and have a little more state pride I think. So thank you for your role in trying to do that as well.

I want to ask a little bit about I guess tuition and, you know, what how you feel about tuition next year and, you know, obviously on the minds of families and students as they budget especially during Covid, you know, anything you can talk about that?

ARI SANTIAGO: You know again, Senator Duff, thank you very much for the question. Listen, I think that it's been a stated goal of the BLR to try and hold down any tuition hikes. One of the best ways to maintain accessibility is to keep it affordable and so I think, you know, certainly can't speak for the Board entirely but I think that is the Board's stated position, its one I am supportive of and I think, you know, keeping tuition as affordable as possible is a critical path to help people especially our disadvantaged students whether they be in rural or urban areas to get accessibility is affordability. So I think it's something I think the Board has talked about numerous times and something I'm very supportive of.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Is the Board taking any action on or you personally on tuition right now?

ARI SANTIAGO: I am not aware of any other than trying to hold firm on where we are. I believe that is our stated position and I am supportive of that.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, great. Thank you. Thank you for your work. I know that there is a lot to do and we're all trying to do our best under these difficult circumstances and we certainly all value our community colleges, debt free community college is very important. Are you supportive of that?

ARI SANTIAGO: Yes, that would be fantastic. Absolutely.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you and congratulations again.

ARI SANTIAGO: Thank you.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you, Chairman Duff. Any other questions from Committee? Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): More of a comment that a question. Thank you, Mr. Santiago for being here and congratulations on your appointment. I love your enthusiasm for our community colleges, it says a lot and I think you will be a wonderful fit for this Board and I just want to thank you for, you said something that certainly resonated with me, is to make our students lifelong learners. And I always add to that and readers. But that really resonated with me, so congratulations on your appointment. I think you will do a wonderful job with this Board. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ARI SANTIAGO: Thank you.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I will also congratulate you on your nomination and it is encouraging to hear what you have to say and what you will be bring to this Board. And I would be remiss to not complement you on your choice of ballpark artwork behind you.

ARI SANTIAGO: Yes, in Connecticut that could have been a bit of a risk but you know it's come as you are.

REP. QUINN (82ND): But it works for me.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): It doesn't work for me but that's okay. We'll talk about that some other time. So seeing no other hands up, appreciate you Mr. Santiago for being with us today. Congratulations on your nomination and if you've been listening to the prior testimonies, there is one question that we ask every nominee is there anything in your past that you believe might prove embarrassing to this Committee, the Governor or the State of Connecticut?

ARI SANTIAGO: No.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you very much, appreciate it. Best of luck to you and obviously reach out to this Committee if you need any help.

ARI SANTIAGO: Thank you.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Well, all right. That was the last item on the Public Hearing Agenda. So I will move to adjourn the public portion, the Public Hearing portion of the Committee. We will wait a few seconds before convening the actual Committee Meeting. Wendy, there were no sign-up correct? I just wanted to make sure.

WENDY FRIT: The only sign-up we had was for the wrong Committee.