



Testimony of Dante Bartolomeo
Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Labor
Before the Appropriations Committee
February 11, 2020

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and members of the Appropriations committee. I am Danté Bartolomeo, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Labor (DOL), and I am here on behalf of Commissioner Kurt Westby, who regrets his inability to join us. It is my pleasure to be with you today to support and discuss Governor Ned Lamont's proposed adjustments to DOL's FY 2021 budget.

I'll begin by addressing the Governor's recommended adjustment to support workforce development. The budget restores the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) as an independent office, housed within the Office of Policy and Management, for administrative purposes only, to strategically align workforce development efforts throughout the state. To support this initiative, \$313,112 and one position is reallocated from the Department of Labor to OWC in order to support the newly reconstituted State Workforce Board, the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC). These adjustments will be made so OWC can independently and effectively staff and support the GWC.

In order to further streamline government operations, we support the Governor's initiative to centralize **Human Resources and Labor Relations staff** under the Department of Administrative Services and the Office of Policy and Management. This realignment of services (\$451,297) from the Labor Department will promote the uniform administration of state processes, systems and functions.

The budget also proposes to reallocate funding for the **Spanish American Merchants Association** (\$454,694) from the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) to DOL. Our agency has a long history of servicing this program, and we have developed extensive relationships with participants over this time. For FY20, the funding for this program was transferred to DECD, but DOL continued to provide the services to the program by entering into an MOU with DECD. In the

interest of administrative streamlining, we welcome the opportunity to continue providing these services with a simplified process.

The budget also includes a \$500,000 decrease in the **Youth Employment Program**. We appreciate the value provided by Youth Services as well as the overriding need of the Governor to balance the budget. It should be noted that the remaining funding (\$4,500,096) still represents a 12.5% increase over the funding levels for FY 2019, and that this program remains a high priority of the Labor Department.

Lastly, Governor Lamont's mid-term budget adjustments also provide additional funding (\$100,000) for the **New Haven Jobs Funnel**. This joint public-private partnership creates career opportunities in construction, and other technical trades, and has produced quality candidates for some of New Haven's largest employers such as Yale University and Yale New Haven Hospital. The New Haven Jobs Funnel has a proven track record and a results-based history for successful placement of Connecticut's residents.

It is the belief of Commissioner Westby and me that the recommended adjustments streamline and enhance our agency's ability to provide services to the state's employees, jobseekers and to the business community. We continue to offer training programs, apprenticeship, incumbent worker training, and unemployment assistance. In addition, our Wage and Workplace Standards Division, CONN-OSHA and Legal Division all assist employers by providing educational programs to keep them informed and up to date with CT laws and regulations to ensure that employees and employers are treated fairly in our state.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to present to you today. We are happy to address any detailed questions you may have concerning this budget.