



Testimony of Garrett Sheehan
President & CEO, Greater New Haven & Quinnipiac Chambers of Commerce
Submitted to the Appropriations Committee
March 26, 2021

Testifying on
**HB 5607: AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS TO REPLENISH
THE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION TRUST FUND**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 5607. Our Chambers represent businesses across the Greater New Haven Region. Throughout the Pandemic we have supported many businesses that have seen significant declines in their revenues and have been forced to make difficult decisions around staffing. The recovery is underway, and HB 5607 will assist in that effort.

As you know, the Pandemic caused a significant shift in work and business. Either through government order or lack of demand, many businesses had to let go of their greatest assets, their employees. These decisions were not made lightly. In many cases, it was literally the only possible way to keep the business in operation. That said, cutting staff is not a pathway to a successful business and our companies know that. We have seen rapid rehiring and new positions coming available each day. There is much more to do, but more employment opportunities are coming.

Ironically, this opportunity to hire new or returning employees may be stunted if employers are left to cover the bill for the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund's \$600-plus million in debt. As has been discussed in reference to other stimulus programs, these employers were forced to shed employees by no fault of their own – the Pandemic brought on this unprecedented loss of jobs. By and large, businesses cut jobs to survive. To make them pay-up now would not be within the spirit of the stimulus and recovery efforts our state and federal government have undertaken.

Connecticut has had a perception of not being “business-friendly.” Throughout the course of the Pandemic, that has not been the case. The state has taken a measured approach to business lockdowns and has been very supportive of business, especially small business. Now would not be the time to stop. Addressing the Fund's debt will allow businesses to continue to invest in their growth in Connecticut and to hire back employees that were let go.

On behalf of the members of the Greater New Haven and Quinnipiac Chambers of Commerce, we respectfully request that you support HB 5607. Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you on this and other important issues going forward.

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